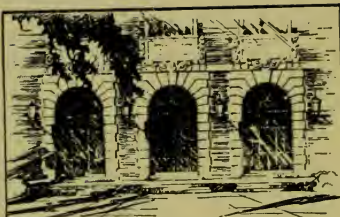


GODIVA DURLEIGH

SARAH DOUDNEY



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GODIVA DURLEIGH.

A NOVEL FOR GIRLS.

BY

SARAH DOUDNEY,

AUTHOR OF

"A WOMAN'S GLORY," "WHERE THE DEW FALLS IN LONDON," ETC.

"Meanwhile to feel and suffer, work and wait,
Remains for us. The wrong indeed is great,
But love and patience conquer soon or late."

J. G. WHITTIER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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GODIVA DURLEIGH.



CHAPTER I.

“THEY SOUGHT HER BAITH ‘BY BOWER
AND HA’.”

WHEN the excitement caused by Sybil’s home-coming had subsided, Godiva began to find out that things were not in a pleasant state in Albert Villa.

The journey home, short as it was, had tested Sybil’s slowly returning strength too severely. She was weak and languid for a week after her arrival, and Godiva was constantly in her room. Yet, despite her own sufferings, Sybil could read the signs of domestic disquiet, and was sorry to see them.

“Honor looks haggard and worried,” she said to her cousin. “I thought she would have taken more comfort from my recovery.”

“If you knew how trying Miss Weedon was, you would not be surprised at Honor’s haggard face,” Godiva replied. “The old lady’s nerves have never recovered from the shock of your accident, and her nervousness has taken the form of intense irritability. She never got on very well with Janet, you know; and now——”

“I see.” Sybil looked anxious and thoughtful. She was beginning to feel a new interest in the home lives, and to concern herself about the things that belonged to their peace.

“Worst of all,” Godiva continued, “she objects to Janet’s music. This is very hard for the poor girl.”

"Papa will not have Janet made unhappy. Aunt Jane will have to go away," said Sybil gravely.

"But she is so firmly established. She gave up her own home, you know, at Honor's suggestion, and Uncle Hugh wished her to live here."

"They wanted to make sure of her money." Sybil spoke with her old bluntness. "It was a mistake to invite her to live with us. But now that her health is shattered, it would be cruel to turn her out."

"I was thinking so," said Godiva. "And if Janet would be a little less impatient, I believe Aunt Jane would become more amiable. Old people want a great deal of petting and humouring; but it is quite possible to manage them, if one has tact."

"No one here has any tact, Godiva,

save yourself. As to Honor, she has given way to Aunt Jane too much. Honor, you see, can never forget the money for a moment; she will endure anything for the sake of the golden future. But Janet won't endure."

No, Janet would not endure. Going downstairs after this talk in Sybil's room, Godiva found a quarrel going on in the drawing-room. Janet, who had dressed early for dinner, was singing at the piano; Miss Weedon, on a sofa, was shrieking out an indignant protest against "the noise"; and Honor was trying to pacify her in vain.

"Can't you stop, Janet?" asked the eldest sister in a tone of entreaty.

Instead of stopping, Janet sang on with the full power of her fine voice, and the old lady was led out of the room in a fury.

It chanced that Hugh Durleigh was dining out, and there was no one to restrain the tongues of aunt and niece when they met again at the table. Janet was reckless, and said everything that came into her head ; the servants listened and stared ; Honor was in despair ; and even Godiva ventured to remonstrate with the excited girl. But she only got a tart answer, and was driven back to silence.

“ Pray don’t sing any more this evening, Janet,” said Honor as they left the dining-room. “ I can’t think why you make these disturbances ; it is most inconsiderate and unkind.”

“ Do you show me any consideration and kindness ? ” Janet asked with intense bitterness. “ Does any one in this house care a straw for me or my voice ? ”

Godiva, who overheard the words, was

thrilled by the pathos in the girl's tone. She knew that there was pain and fire in a heart like poor Janet's. It was true that Honor, prosaic and commonplace, neither understood her sister nor cared for her very much. Godiva stood aloof, and was deeply troubled.

After these painful scenes, it was pleasant to go upstairs again to Sybil's peaceful room. There were two large windows overlooking the wide common and the sea. Sybil, lying on a couch, was dressed in her blue wrapper, and had been reading the *Idylls* in the clear evening light. She looked up, as her cousin entered, with a sunny smile of welcome.

"Ah, Godiva," she said, "I am almost wishing that we were back again in the old cottage parlour. Those evening readings were so delightful!"

Godiva's heart echoed the wish. Perhaps her face told something, for Sybil asked quickly if there was any more unpleasantness downstairs?

"Matters are not improving," Godiva answered with reluctance. "But I do not see that we can do any good at present, and you must not distress yourself. So you are thinking of the readings!"

"Yes." Sybil's eyes took a new expression, and gazed far out across the sea. "How distinctly one can remember certain voices!"

"Especially the guiding and consoling voices," said Godiva, recalling Amyot Douglas and his words.

Both were silent for a little while. Godiva was busy with a small frock, which was destined for the brown baby. Sybil had closed her book, and was

following a white sail gleaming away on the distant blue. Hugh Durleigh had sent some powerful field-glasses to his daughter's room, and they lay on a table near her couch. Presently she took them up with an absent air, and looked through them.

"There is Janet!" she said suddenly.

"Are you sure that it is Janet?" Godiva asked. "I heard her say that she was going to see Mrs. Steene."

"She has not gone to Mrs. Steene; she is alone, standing near the entrance to the Castle. Ah, some one has joined her—a man. I don't know him; he is a stranger."

"Are you sure that it is Janet?" Godiva repeated.

"Perfectly sure. She is wearing her blue foulard, and has put on her beaver cape and black velvet toque. The man looks like a foreigner."

“ She wore the blue foulard at dinner,”
Godiva said thoughtfully.

“ She is talking eagerly and gesticulating. Now they are moving off together; in another minute they will disappear behind the Castle. There they go! Oh, Godiva, I wonder who the foreigner is? ”

“ My dear, you cannot be certain that he is a foreigner. You have been away from your home a long time, and I dare say Janet has made new friends.”

Sybil put the glasses back upon the table, and sighed.

“ Godiva,” she said after a long pause, “ you are a good, calm little creature. But Janet and I are wild, impulsive beings, and when we are thwarted we become utterly unmanageable. I have been chastened severely, and so I have come to my right mind. But Janet——”

She was suddenly silent; the colour, which had stolen back to her cheeks, faded away; her eyes filled with tears. Godiva rose at once, and knelt down beside the couch.

“This will never do, Sybil,” she said, with a kiss. “When people stay indoors too long they always get morbid. We must take a drive to-morrow. As to that foreigner, I don’t quite believe in him.”

“Then you don’t believe I saw Janet?” Sybil dried her eyes, and tried to smile.

“Yes; the blue foulard convinced me. But I think the foreigner was some everyday acquaintance wearing a new aspect. Anyhow, we shall hear. Janet always talks about everything that she does.”

Sybil was soothed, and took up her book again. Before the last light of day had died off the sea she was tired, and said she would go to bed.

At half-past nine Godiva heard the hall door open, and then met Janet coming upstairs. The girl wore her beaver cape over the blue foulard gown; her fair hair was a little disordered under the velvet toque. She was flushed—handsome—with a strange light in her eyes.

“Have you been to see Mrs. Steene?” asked Godiva in her sweet voice. “And did you sing to her?”

“No.” Janet gave her a defiant look. “I went out alone and walked by the sea. It did me good to get away from this detestable house.”

“Janet dear, I am very sorry.”

“Why are you sorry? You know the house is detestable, and you are disgusted with us all.”

She did not wait for a reply, but swept on upstairs humming a tune. And as

Godiva looked after her it struck her that Janet had become more stately of late, and carried herself with a certain consciousness of power.

All the next day she preserved the air of defiance and the flush on her cheeks. Although she did not touch the piano, she went about the house singing, and her voice could be heard through the fast-closed door of her room. In that room she spent a good deal of her time, coming down to meals, but speaking no word to Miss Weedon, and bestowing very little notice on Honor. To Godiva she was civil, and once she went to her father's side and kissed him.

A vague feeling of discomfort filled Godiva's heart; but she could give no definite feeling for the fear which had taken possession of her. Perhaps she was uneasy because Janet no longer

talked in her old, wild manner, saying things without caring who heard them.

Belle Espinasse was in town, staying with an aunt who was well known in society, and the general took his daily walks with only his collie for a companion. He looked worn and old, although Major Pendennis himself never made greater efforts to preserve the smart military aspect that belonged to younger days. Lady Colinette, too, was in town; and Godiva was not surprised to receive from her a letter and an invitation.

“You must come to me, my dear child,” she wrote. “I am staying with my godmother, and there is a little room next to mine waiting for you. It is always expected of me that I shall spend some weeks with Mrs. Errington in early summer. I think you will like this

cheerful house with its flowery balcony ; and when you are once accustomed to my godmother's imposing height and wonderful caps, you will find her as mild as milk."

The "cheerful house" was in Park Lane ; and Mrs. Errington, a widow, intended to leave the whole of her large fortune to her godchild, making no secret of her determination. But the thought of her heiress-ship sat very lightly on Colinette.

"You must go, Godiva," said Hugh Durleigh.

Godiva had opened her letter at the breakfast-table, and when her uncle spoke, Janet gave her a quick, mischievous glance. There was a meaning in the look which her cousin could not understand.

"I should like to go," she answered ;

“but I am afraid Sybil will miss me.”

“You must not stay on her account; she would not wish it,” said Honor earnestly. “You know we are going to make a pretty little sitting-room upstairs for her, and she will have something to think about.”

Sybil herself echoed the cry of the others—“you must go.” But Godiva knew how much she should be missed, and how often her return would be sighed for. The change which had been wrought in the feelings of her cousins was a very real change, true and lasting.

“Ann is gone,” remarked Honor to her father as they lingered over dessert that evening. “It is a relief; she was unsettling the other servants, you know.”

“Why did she give notice?” he asked absently.

“She complained of the amount of extra work which Sybil’s illness has caused. But really she was very obliging.”

“Did you see the surprising quantity of luggage which was piled on the top of her cab?” said Miss Weedon. “I happened to be near the window when she went off. Three big boxes! Absurd, wasn’t it?”

Why was it that Janet, helping herself to some preserved fruit, became suddenly scarlet? Godiva saw the hot colour mount up to the very roots of her light hair, and glanced away in pity. But she remembered that sudden flush afterwards.

All through the next morning she was busy with packing. Her room was next to Sybil’s, and she ran in and out to talk to her cousin, thus prolonging her labour. Honor had gone out for a drive with Miss

Weedon, and the house was very still—so still that Sybil inquired for Janet.

“I wonder she is not singing now that Aunt Jane is out,” she said. “I have not heard her voice since breakfast.”

“She has been very quiet since the last disturbance,” replied Godiva sadly. “I am afraid she is not happy, Sybil. She has quite a new manner, and seldom speaks.”

“I wish she would come and sit with me sometimes,” sighed Sybil. “She does not dislike me as much as she did, but she never seeks me.”

Godiva, too, sighed as she went on with her packing. Presently Miss Weedon and Honor returned from their drive; and then came one o’clock and luncheon.

“Where is Janet?” asked Honor, as they sat down to the table.

No one could say. One of the servants

had heard the hall door open and shut soon after the ladies had gone off in the carriage. Godiva, having been occupied upstairs all the morning, had heard nothing; but her heart began to throb with a painful fear.

They sent the page into the next house to make inquiries; but Janet had not been to see Mrs. Steene for days. The wily widow, less composed than usual, came in to know what was the matter.

“Janet is missing, that is all,” replied Honor, trying her hardest to make light of the affair. “Of course she’ll come back presently; but papa is fidgety about his girls, and Janet was always his pet. I do hope she will return before he comes home,” added poor Honor, giving way a little, and putting up her hand to her forehead.

“Are you sure that she isn’t shut up

in her room ? ” asked Mrs. Steene soothingly. “ When girls are a trifle vexed or low-spirited they shut themselves up quite stubbornly sometimes. Has any one opened her door ? ”

“ No; we have only knocked and called. But she can’t be there—it isn’t in her to be quiet,” said Honor, leading the way upstairs with a hopeless look.

The others followed. As she had expected, the room was empty, but there was something bare and unusual in its aspect which struck her at once.

Of all the members of the household Janet had ever been the most untidy. No sooner had her belongings been gathered together and put away by the maids than they were scattered about again by her impatient hands. It was not strange, therefore, that Honor started when she saw that the usual litter was gone.

Pale, and with lips tightly compressed, she went to the wardrobe. Only two dresses were hanging there; one was a black lace gown, which had seen a good deal of service, the other a calicot, torn and stained. She remembered that Janet had come down to dinner in the old black lace on the evening before.

No one spoke. Mrs. Steene and Godiva seemed to hold their breath as she went to the drawers and opened them one after another. Some linen was all that remained—handkerchiefs, gloves, laces, and trinkets had utterly disappeared. The large dressing-case that had always stood on a little table in a corner had vanished.

Godiva's voice, speaking low and hurriedly, broke the silence. She was holding a letter in her hand.

"I found it on the dressing-table,

Honor," she said. "It is addressed to you."

Without speaking, Honor eagerly tore open the note. It contained only a few lines, but every word went like a dagger to her heart.

"I am leaving a wretched home," the writer said. "No one cared for me excepting papa; and I was a trouble even to him. I shall write again later on; but you will not find me, so do not search.

"JANET."

Honor turned to Godiva, holding out the letter with eyes full of dumb distress.

"Then she is really gone?" said Mrs. Steene in a whisper. "Does she say that—that any one is with her?"

"She does not say so." Honor's face was colourless, and she spoke with diffi-

culty. "But do you suspect anything? Please tell me at once."

With a rapid motion the widow closed the door. "I do suspect something," she said. "Once or twice Janet has been seen strolling by the sea with a dark man. I saw him with her once. He was remarkably handsome, and had a foreign face."

"Did she know that you saw her?" Honor asked breathlessly.

"I think not. It was about a week ago. People were beginning to talk a little, I fancy. No one seemed to know him."

"And you never told me?" Honor said indignantly.

"My dear Honor, I could not have ventured!" Mrs. Steene was very bland. "How could I know that you would have liked my interference? Besides, I

was not sure that the man was a stranger to you. I was ignorant, you see. As to the gossips, no one heeds them in a watering-place."

"The gossips will have a fine feast now," said Honor bitterly. "We have no friends. I wish we could turn our backs on Silversea for ever!"

"That cannot be." It was Godiva who spoke in a grave voice, with strange composure. "We must try to find her, and lose no time. There is no doubt that she has gone to London. Ann must have taken away her clothes in those large boxes that Miss Weedon saw on the cab."

"Then Ann was in her confidence?" gasped Honor.

"It is clear that she was. Without her help Janet could not have removed her luggage. Honor, I will go straight

to Uncle Hugh, and bring him home. We ought to do something at once."

Mrs. Steene looked at Godiva in astonishment. Was this the despised little cousin who took the lead with quiet confidence, and was equal to the occasion? But Godiva did not observe the wondering gaze; she was not thinking of the widow, or of the past, or of herself. She had but one thought, one motive—Janet, and how to save her from unknown woe.

"We must tell Sybil the bad news as gently as possible," she went on. "I will go to her before I set off to Uncle Hugh. And, Honor, it will be well to question cook; she may know where Ann is. It is possible that Ann could help us a little if we found her."

Mrs. Steene was annoyed with Honor for yielding at once to Godiva's influence, and going away in search of cook. It

was absurd, she thought, that this girl should direct everybody.

“ Shall I speak to dear Sybil for you, Honor ? ” she said.

“ No, thank you. Godiva understands her better than any one does,” Honor answered absently.

It was not until she found Miss Weedon in hysterical tears that Mrs. Steene discovered an occupation. Here her talents were brought into play ; in soothing irritated nerves and allaying exaggerated fears she was really useful. Godiva, meanwhile, had gone to Sybil, and told her everything.

“ You can only help us by being brave, dear,” she said. “ If you are worried and distressed you will be ill, and we must have no illness now, if we can help it. We shall want all our thoughts and all our strength.”

It was the first time that Godiva had passed through the crowded streets that led to her uncle's office; but she gave little attention to anything that was to be heard or seen. It was still early in the afternoon when she reached her destination. The clerks stared at her in undisguised astonishment; a visit from any of the Miss Durleighs was a most unusual thing. She was conducted to her uncle's private room at once, although several clients were waiting.

"Godiva," he said quickly, "you have brought bad news; I can read it in your face. Is Sybil worse?"

"No; much better. My news concerns Janet, dear Uncle Hugh. She—I must tell you at once—she has run away."

A groan and a smothered exclamation broke from Hugh Durleigh's lips, and

a look of intense misery swept over his face. Then the lawyer prevailed over the man; the long habit of self-control asserted its power, and he rose quietly from his seat.

“When did you miss her?” was his first question.

“At luncheon. Then we searched her room, and found this note addressed to Honor.”

His hand trembled slightly as he took the folded paper, but his composure did not give way again.

“You will know best what to do,” she said timidly. “But I was thinking that if we went to the railway station at once she might be traced. I have a cab waiting.”

To the railway station they went, saying very little on the way. And here they obtained the first clue. A Silversea

tradesman, waiting at the station for business reasons, had seen and recognized Mr. Durleigh's second daughter. She was alone, and looked after her own luggage ; and she had got into a London train.

"It might not perhaps be very difficult to trace her, after all," said Godiva, much cheered by this successful start ; but Hugh Durleigh was less hopeful. The real difficulties were yet to come.

"I shall go up to town at once," he said, "and set the detectives to work. My fear is that some adventurer, tempted by her voice, has got her into his net. Voices like hers are rare. He wants to make a *prima donna* of her, and fill his own pockets ; he has taken advantage of the child's discontent at home. Honor has managed very badly ; it rested with her to make matters more comfortable.

But it's too late for regret. This is my train, Godiva. You'll go back and tell them what I've done. But keep things as quiet as possible."

"I will," she promised eagerly.

"You'll go up to Lady Colinette—don't alter any of your arrangements," he said at the last moment. "You may help us in London—who knows?"

She was feeling utterly tired and spent as she made her way back to Albert Villa. Her mind was full of plans, and hopes, and fears, and she hardly realized how weary she was until the villa came in sight. Then, indeed, her head drooped, and when she tried to answer Honor's questions her voice died away into a whisper. Honor woke up to a consciousness of her cousin's exhausted condition with a start.

"We have nearly killed you, Godiva,"

she said with real remorse in her tone.
“ Pray go up into Sybil’s room and rest.
I will send you some tea at once. For-
give my selfishness—this trouble has
overwhelmed me.”

CHAPTER II.

REVELATIONS.

THE days that followed the terrible day of Janet's flight were dreamy and restful to Godiva. She was in Mrs. Errington's house in Park Lane, and Lady Colinette and her hostess did all that could be done to soothe and strengthen her.

A week went by without bringing any news from Janet, saving a brief note saying that she was safe and well. The letter bore a London post-mark, but the detectives had sought her in vain, and her hiding-place was still a mystery. Those few sentences comforted Godiva,

and took off the keen edge of fear. At any rate, Janet was alive and apparently happy; by-and-by she would get tired of her voluntary exile and go home. Did not Lady Colinette think so?

But Colinette did not say all that she thought. She petted Godiva, and took her out to see the shows of the season, carefully avoiding all unnecessary fatigue. The cordial welcome which the girl received made Mrs. Errington's house delightful. She enjoyed everything, simply and sincerely; the unexpected luxuries were thoroughly appreciated. And yet all the while she was longing for tidings of some one whose name she never mentioned—not even to Colinette.

Later on she had promised to go to Richmond; but she hardly liked to own, even to herself, that she shrank from the Kemples now. She did not love them

less ; she never forgot their kindness for a moment ; but she could not bear to talk to them about Rex. She knew that he went very seldom to Garden Lodge nowadays ; Miss Charlotte's letters had told her this. She felt that it was quite possible that she might not see him while she stayed with his aunt ; but she dreaded to revisit the scenes of old happiness. How could she bear to meet Joy again ? How could she stroll along those familiar garden paths, now that the birds were singing and the flowers were in bloom ?

One afternoon Colinette took her to a fancy fair, held in aid of a new hospital. It was patronized by a royal lady, and crowded with celebrities of every description ; and Godiva looked about her with a good deal of interest and pleasure. There were people here who did not care

a sou about the sick who needed their money and their help; scores of them had only come because royalty came. But there were others whom it was good to see—men who, with cultivation and power and opportunity, were doing a great work in the world; speaking brave words for human rights, spending their strength and gold for the sake of their weaker brethren. Morris Durleigh, with his heaven-cleared sight, had seen that society was not entirely composed of shams; he had learnt that a man may be both courteous and true.

More than one of Lady Colinette's friends were attracted by the quiet girl at her side. Without knowing it, Godiva had the gentle ease which always gives an air of distinction. Her thoughts were constantly occupied with a thousand interesting things; she did not dream

of winning attention. But underlying all her simple pleasures there was ever the dull ache of the familiar pain.

Suddenly she saw Rex. It gave her a strange bewildering sensation, seeing him now, in this new place, among all these fashionable people. He was walking with two ladies; one elderly and plain, the other young and brilliantly beautiful. For just one second she did not recognize the beauty, with her imperious air and rich costume; and then she saw that it was Belle Espinasse.

In an instant it seemed as if Rex had drifted miles and miles away. He was wholly gone from her into a distant sphere which never gives us back our friends. It is Life, not Death, which creates the sense of division. It is the world that takes our beloved from us, not the grave.

After the first glance she saw two things—first, that he had not caught sight of her ; second, that he was greatly altered.

Seeing him here, herself unobserved, she saw him in a new light. She discerned, very sharply, the loss that he had sustained. His features were worn and sharpened ; he looked older by two or three years. But this was not the only change. She missed that peculiar grace of dignity which had always lifted Rex Longworthy above others, even in his boyhood. It was gone, and in its stead there had come an anxious *seeking* expression—a restlessness of eye and lip which told of dissatisfaction and unrest.

Perhaps it may be that the fever of unrequited love tells more disastrously upon men than upon women. The latter, with their innate power of patience and

endurance, can accept their fate even if they fade under the blight. While she suffered, Godiva was calm, and outwardly very still.

He was so far from her now, that it seemed as if heaven itself could never bring them together again. He could never more regain his old place in her esteem. This mad love for mere physical beauty had humbled him in her eyes. For the first time she was conscious that her nature recoiled from his—that the most familiar intercourse would fail to restore the old sense of union.

“ But that which keepeth us apart is not

Distance, nor depth of wave, nor space of earth,”

is the cry of many a soul which has lost its mate.

Lady Colinette flashed one swift glance at her companion, and saw everything. Another swift glance went in search of

Amyot Douglas, and summoned him to her side.

“Take care of Godiva, and lead her away from the crowd,” she whispered; and he understood.

Even then Godiva found herself vaguely wondering why his influence calmed her spirit. He did not talk much, and at first he spoke only of outward things. But after a little time the truth and tenderness in him gave a deep meaning to his words. He knew that she suffered, and it was his mission to say, “Peace, be still.”

When they returned to Park Lane the rest of the day passed very quietly. Lady Colinette went out to dine, and Godiva repaired early to her room. She shut herself in, took off the dress she had been wearing, and put on a wrapper. Then she loosened her thick hair, and

sat down by the open window to think.

It was a lovely night; a late moon was shining over the park; the scent of flowers floated up from the balcony below. She was not as unhappy as she had been; but her life seemed empty, and the sense of loneliness was deepening every moment. Time went by unheeded; she had not stirred hand or foot when, more than an hour later, there was a light tap on her door. It was Colinette.

"May I come in?" she whispered, entering softly and closing the door. "I have just come home, and I knew that I should find you awake. Poor child, you are tired, and yet you cannot sleep?"

Godiva turned a weary face towards her friend, but did not speak. There was a restless shine in her eyes.

Lady Colinette put her arms round her, and stroked the hair away from her forehead with a soothing touch.

“I knew that you would have to know some day, my child,” she said; “but I did not think that the shock would come this afternoon. However, it’s all over. And the worst of it all is, that you can’t help despising him just a little!”

“How did you guess that?” Godiva asked.

“How does one find one’s way along a perfectly familiar path? Well, you do despise him, and so do I. Not for falling under the spell of beauty, but for being the slave of a woman who does not care for him.”

“It is true.” Godiva sat upright, with folded arms. “She does not care for him—nor for any one.”

“She is the kind of woman that men

often follow to their own hurt," continued Colinette. "When it suits her purpose she will give them a sigh now and then. You and I, Godiva, are capable of loving, and suffering for love's sake. But Belle would not cut off one tress of that beautiful hair of hers to save one of her lovers from pain. I scarcely think she is deceiving Rex; he knows that she is bent on securing one of the world's great prizes. And yet he is always hovering near her."

"Let him hover," said the figure in the chair. "I know what Belle is. When I wanted to dress her up in imaginary good qualities she would not let me do it. Months ago she told me the truth about herself. I can thank her for it now. She was perfectly frank; no one can blame her for anything." Even now, when she was smarting

under the consciousness of being neglected and forgotten, Godiva was still true to her sense of justice. She paused a moment, and then spoke again. "And Rex was not bound to me by any tie saving that of friendship. He—was fond of me, I know, and I could see what Miss Charlotte hoped. My father liked Rex. He saw that there was good in him. It is not that he is untrue to me—he has broken no vow; but he is untrue to himself."

Lady Colinette looked thoughtfully at the small pale face, clearly visible in the lamplight that shone upon it. She thought how set and stern it looked. She had not believed that Godiva could be so resolute. This soft little woman could be strong enough to shut the door of her heart against a truant lover, even if he came praying to be let in.

“Godiva,” she said, “I think you can be sterner than I could ever be.”

“Yes; I think, perhaps, I can be stern,” the girl answered. “Does disappointment make people so?”

“Sometimes. But we must always be prepared for disappointments in our friends. I have seen many fail just when I expected them to be at their best. Don’t expect more from humanity than it is able to give. As dear old Johnson said, ‘A fallible creature must fail somewhere.’”

Godiva’s face showed no sign of softening.

“True,” she answered coldly. “But some ways of failing are worse than others.”

“She will never forgive him,” said Colinette to herself. “And she will go through life lamenting for him in secret.

It is a pity—all a pity. When this fever of his is over he will come back to her in his right mind; and she will send him away, although it may break her heart to do it.”

Pale and quiet, Godiva turned towards the window with a far-away look in her eyes.

“Father never disappointed me,” she whispered after a silence. “He lived for the great cause, and that is a thousand times better than living for an individual.”

“Ah, yes,” said Colinette, with a little sigh. “Only it is in the nature of a woman to live for an individual.”

She was too wise, however, to discuss this point with one whose heart was so sore. With gentle force she drew Godiva away from the window, pulled down the blind, and shut out the moonlight.

In the morning she came noiselessly into the girl's room, and found her awaking from a heavy sleep.

It was like a vision of the night to Godiva, almost, the remembrance of the gay crowd of yesterday; like a dream was that sudden meeting with Belle Espinasse and Rex. But our morning draught from the cup of sorrow is always the most bitter. She drank hers with a shudder, and then met the pitying gaze of Còlinette's hazel eyes.

"This morning," said Colinette, "we are not going to a picture gallery; we are going to see creatures of flesh and blood. But they are pitiable creatures, Godiva. Are you strong enough to come with me to Charing Cross Hospital?"

A sudden light came into the sad, grey eyes that were lifted to the speaker.

"Thanks, Colinette, for your proposal,"

she replied. Her voice was low; it was all she said, but her look was more eloquent than words.

They went out together a little later into the sunlight of a perfect day.

Mrs. Errington's carriage set them down at the entrance to the hospital, and the first person they saw was Amyot Douglas, waiting for them on the steps. Colinette said a few words to him about the patient they had both come to see.

Old memories came back like a flood as Godiva followed her friends through the hospital wards. She had been here with her father; his voice and face returned to her as she moved quietly along between the rows of narrow beds. One of the sisters, a smiling young woman, came up and held out her hand in welcome.

"I am glad to see you again, Miss

Durleigh," she said. And then she began to speak of some of the old patients who had owed much to Morris Durleigh. How were Mrs. Hammond and her children? The poor woman had lain on one of those beds for weeks, stricken down by a blow from her drunken husband. So the cheery little sister talked on, and Mr. Douglas and Colinette stood beside their patient, a young girl in her teens, gentle and beautiful in spite of suffering.

In the bed next to the gentle girl there was a woman who never had been gentle. She had restless eyes—one could not tell what colour they were—and a hard face, which had once been rather handsome. Moved by one of those impulses which can never be accounted for, Godiva went and stood by her side. Perhaps she went because she saw that this young woman

was not likely to interest the usual visitors. True to her father's teaching, she looked round, half unconsciously, for such members of the human family as were apt to be neglected by their brethren. This woman did not invite sympathy; she seemed ready to repel its advances; and yet Godiva could see that she wanted something. What was it? The girl could only approach her with the old question, uttered in a soft voice.

“Do you suffer much?”

There was an impatient jerk of the head.

“I don't want to talk about my sufferings,” was the ungracious answer. “It's hard enough to bear 'em without talking about 'em. What I want is to know something that nobody can tell me. There are a lot of stupids that come here.”

“Stupid people are everywhere,” replied Godiva quietly. “But they often mean to do their best. What is it that you want to know?”

“Oh, *you* can’t tell me!” There was another jerk. “And folks won’t take the trouble to inquire and find out. It’s a girl that I want to find, and I don’t know where she’s gone. She came from the country, and had a queer name.”

“What was her name?” Godiva’s voice was as quiet as before, but her heart beat a little faster.

“Joy Doveridge.”

And then Morris Durleigh’s daughter knew that a great and unseen power had led her to the hospital that sunny morning. Joy had never been forgotten when new interests and new sorrows had come crowding into her life. She had

been drawn here to help Joy, the forlorn girl who owed a peaceful home to Morris Durleigh's watchfulness.

"I know a girl of that name," she said very calmly.

"You know her? Where is she? What does she look like?"

The woman spoke rapidly, with a gasp between each question, and a look of fierce eagerness in her eyes.

"She is living with two ladies at Richmond." Godiva never changed her quiet tone. "And she is a pretty girl, with blue eyes and a fresh colour."

"Ah! that's her," murmured the woman, sinking back on her bed. "So she's happy, is she? Do you know if she's got a lover?"

"She had a lover once, but she lost him, and she can't forget him," Godiva answered.

“I knew his name; ’twas George.” The poor creature’s voice was getting weaker. “Well, miss, I can’t tell you what’s become of him.”

Godiva felt a thrill of disappointment, but she controlled herself, and tried to hide her agitation.

“Why have you been asking about Joy Doveridge?” she inquired gently. “Do you wish to send her a message?”

The pinched face flushed faintly; there was a moment’s hesitation, then the woman looked up into the clear, constraining eyes that seemed to be expecting her reply.

“It’s no odds to me now,” she said huskily, “whether I speak the truth or not. There was a ten-pound note given to Joy one day; we were both in service at Captain Lingham’s, at Notting Hill, at that time, and Mrs. Lingham trusted her

with the note to get change and pay some bills."

Godiva glanced towards Mr. Douglas and met his eyes. He understood her sign, and came to her side in a moment.

"What is it?" he asked kindly.

"Here is a poor woman," she said, "who wishes to make a statement, and it will be best, I think, for you to take it down. It concerns a girl in whom my father was interested. He saved her from want, and found her a home, but there was a stain on her character which she could not clear away. We always believed in her, but she had no means of proving her innocence."

Amyot Douglas took out his note-book; the sister brought pen and ink. The woman hesitated again, and he spoke to her in that quiet, penetrating voice which had found its way to many a stubborn heart.

“You will be happier when you have told us everything,” he said. “Peace will not come until you have done justice. You have been miserable, but you are going to find relief and rest. Do not be afraid; there must be this one effort, that is all.”

“I shall never get well, I know that,” she muttered sadly. “And I’ve been miserable, sir; you aren’t far wrong there. What I did was done for my Tom—the man I was keeping company with—and the sister can tell you how he paid me back. I’m dying of a blow he gave me—a blow that caused a cancer—and they can’t do anything more for me now.”

“It is true,” came in a whisper from the sister’s lips.

“But you can do a great deal for another,” Mr. Douglas said softly. “And you must open your heart to let the light

shine in. Do not fear; we are your friends."

The woman glanced down at her thin fingers moving restlessly on the coverlet. The light from the high window of the ward fell on Amyot's noble face, with its look of knightly calm. She glanced up again at that face, and felt that it might be trusted unto death—ay, and beyond death.

"I'll tell you," she said, "and you may write it all down if you like. It must be written, I fancy, if it's to do Joy any good, for Captain Lingham won't believe anything that isn't in black and white. My name's Emily West, and I lived in his service two years."

Amyot Douglas wrote rapidly. Lady Colinette and the sister were listening, and Godiva's gaze was fixed upon the speaker.

“I took a dislike to Joy from the first,” she went on. “She was prettier than I was, and had a lover who cared for her more than mine did for me. Bad feelings grow faster than good ones, I think; anyhow my dislike grew, and when my mistress made a sort of pet of Joy I could not bear it. At Christmas Mrs. Lingham gave her a green morocco bag with a steel clasp, just what I was wanting. I never rested till I had gone and bought one exactly like it for myself; and that’s how all the mischief came to pass.”

Godiva remembered every detail of Joy’s story. Her heart was throbbing violently, but she bit her lips and tried to seem unmoved.

“One afternoon,” Emily continued, “I was dusting the books in the nursery, and my temper was worse than usual. Mistress was lolling in her chair by the

fire, and she called Joy, gave her a ten-pound note, and told her to go to the draper's. She was to make some purchases, pay for them out of the note, and bring back the change. I fancy I see that girl's face now; she looked pleased at being trusted, and sort of proud, I thought. She took the note, and put it into her purse, and shut up the purse in her new bag. And then, just as she was going off, mistress remembered something else. She wanted new strings for her bonnet, and sent Joy upstairs to cut a bit of ribbon off the old strings as a pattern."

She paused to take breath. No one spoke; Godiva's cheeks were flushed deeply, but she was quite still.

"So Joy put her bag on the round table, just beside a pile of stockings that had to be mended; and mistress turned

her back to the table and her face to the fire. Then she put up her feet on the fender, opened her novel, and forgot everything else in the world. All at once a thought came into my head. I said to myself that I'd play Joy a trick. Quick as lightning I was in those days. Mistress never heard me slip out of the room to fetch my own bag."

Again there was a pause. It seemed doubtful whether Emily's strength would hold out to the end of her tale. But something seemed to sustain her, and she went on.

"As I've said, my bag was exactly like hers, bought at the same place, as like as one pin is to another. And when I took her bag, and put mine on the table in its stead, I declare I meant nothing worse than to play her a trick. I wanted to give her a big fright, and a walk in

the cold for nothing. She stayed a good long time upstairs, hunting for mistress's bonnet; and when she came down and caught up my bag, I nearly spoilt everything by laughing outright, it seemed such a joke to me."

"Don't excite yourself," the sister interposed gently. "Tell the story in your own way, but tell it as simply and quietly as you can."

"After Joy had gone out, the captain came in, and roused mistress out of her novel," resumed Emily, drawing a long breath. "He'd met Joy walking with her young man, and he was one of those masters who thought that us servants had no business to have young men. He told mistress that she was putting too much confidence in the girl; and then, I think, she got a little frightened. They turned to me—both of 'em—and asked

if I knew anything of Joy's sweetheart? And I said that I didn't know any good of him. I hated him, that's the truth, he was so fond of that girl with her baby face, and he never would take any notice of me."

It was of no use to waste time in reproaches; but there were bitter thoughts in Godiva's mind at that moment. George had been faithful; one woman in the world had possessed that rare treasure, a true lover, and envy had blighted her happiness.

"Then, when I saw that the captain was set against George, I thought of my Tom," confessed Emily, with a suppressed sob. "He was always at me for money, Tom was; he used to get nearly all my wages. As I'd got ten pounds in my hands, it seemed foolish-like to let it slip. And while I was

making up my mind to keep the money, in rushed Joy, as white as a sheet, and told us that the purse was gone out of her bag. There was such a row as you never heard. Captain Lingham was a violent man, and mistress always took to screaming when she was in a passion. If I'd wanted to explain, they wouldn't have listened then. And if they'd listened, they'd never have believed that I'd only meant to play a trick. So I held my tongue, and Joy was driven out of the house."

There was silence for a few seconds. Godiva put her hand over her eyes, trying to hide the hot tears that trickled slowly down her cheeks.

"I dare say there's no name too bad for me," said Emily, speaking more feebly. "But I've been paid out for what I did—yes, indeed I have. Up to

the last moment I never felt a bit of pity for Joy—I was only frightened, and sort of bewildered, I think. But cook was sorry for the girl, and scribbled down the name of some one she knew, and told Joy to go to her. It was all over in a very little while. Joy was gone: the harm was done. That very night my Tom came to see me, just outside the back-door; and I gave him the note. I knew that mistress hadn't taken the number; if she had we might have been caught. But she'd no more sense than one of her own babies, and there wasn't a silly thing that she didn't do."

The sister bent over Emily, and gently wiped her heated face. Lady Colinette silently handed her some eau-de-cologne. Mr. Douglas had hastily written out the statement, and the woman signed it with a feeble hand.

“That’s all,” she said, with a gasp. “I suppose Joy wouldn’t say that she forgave me, would she? If she would—why, dying would be easier. Not that I deserve much ease, miss, as you’re thinking, no doubt?”

“Miss Durleigh is not thinking any such hard thought,” Amyot Douglas answered. “She knows where to find Joy, and now that you have repaired this great wrong——”

“Stop, there’s one thing more,” Emily broke in. “The very day after Joy left the Linghams a letter came for her. I gave it back to the postman, and told him I didn’t know where she was gone. Then, maybe a fortnight later, George came himself. Cook was out, and I told him just the same thing. Mistress had flown into a passion, I said, and given her sudden notice; and that was all I could say.”

“But how did George take it?” Godiva asked the question with quivering lips. “Try to remember all he said—please tell me everything.”

“He was a good deal upset, miss—there was no doubt of that. He spoke to me more civilly than usual, being so broken down. He said he had written to Joy to say he had left his lodging, and was going out of London for a time to look for work. When I heard him speak of her so lovingly, miss, I couldn’t bear it. I was afraid he’d find her and see her righted. So I sent him away.”

“And you never saw him again?” asked Mr. Douglas, seeing that Godiva could not speak.

“No, sir; never. Soon after that I left the Lingham myself, and went to my Tom. I’ve never been in service since that time. Oh, sir, the young

lady looks as if she couldn't forgive me!"

"No, no," said Mr. Douglas, quietly laying a hand on Godiva's shoulder, and feeling that she shook from head to foot. "There are reasons why your tale has moved her deeply. But I will promise that not only Miss Durleigh shall forgive you, but Joy also. Will it make you happier if I say, too, that I will try to find Joy's George?"

"Yes, sir," said Emily faintly. "Yes, it will."

CHAPTER III.

GOOD TIDINGS.

It was strange how the telling of this story had softened Emily. The hard look had melted away from her face. Confession had broken the seal that sin had set upon her heart, and opened it to gentle influences. As she had truly said, she had suffered greatly. A passionate woman, pouring out such love as she could give on a bad man, she had been mocked and deceived and cruelly ill-used. She had drained her cup of bitterness to the very dregs; and all the sins of her past had come to haunt her as she

lay in the hospital ward, dying of Tom's blow.

Lying there, in constant pain, the face that rose often before her eyes was a girl's face—bright, innocent, and surrounded with ripples of golden hair. What sort of fate had awaited that simple country girl, driven forth into the brawling, raging world of London? Emily had begun to be terribly frightened when she thought of Joy. She believed in a God still, and she sometimes wondered whether He would require her to give an account of Joy Doveridge? Supposing He should make her answerable for all Joy's sins as well as her own.

The freshness of a pure life had clung to the girl like the delicate scent of the woodbine, growing in the Hampshire lanes from which she had come. That

wild-flower sweetness, so soon lost in cities, has always been the despair of those who are spotted by the world. Emily hated Joy for possessing it, and hated her all the more because it attracted others. Even Tom, loitering outside the Lingham's house one day, had questioned Emily rather persistently about the pretty nursemaid.

Lying on her narrow bed in the ward, the thought that tortured her most was the thought of a fair life sullied—a sweet face grown hard and bold. She wondered how those clear blue eyes would look if they were lighted up with an evil fire? She wondered whether the faded bloom on the cheeks was supplied with paint and powder? And the bright hair—were there false locks worn to cover the scanty tresses? She knew enough of ruined lives to follow them through

every physical change. The story of a lost woman is a catalogue of losses from its first page to its last.

At last, when she could no longer bear these tormenting visions in silence, she fell to asking questions of every one she saw. Doctors, nurses, visitors—all had heard the name of Joy Doveridge, jerked out impatiently from this woman's lips. No one could tell her what she wanted to know; some thought that she was wandering. And so her dreamy days went on.

She could be quiet now, bearing her pain in patience, and giving no trouble to those around her. It did not matter what they thought of her very much; the parson had said that she would be forgiven. Anything was better than going out of life, and leaving a great wrong undone.

And now that she had eased her conscience, she did not care how soon death came. For her, death would come without any fuss or parade of woe. There would be no black carriage and memorial wreath; but peace at last, release from the poor body that had ached so wearily after Tom's blows—rest for the feverish heart worn out by its own passions. She lay and thought of this through many a long hour.

When Godiva came out again into the sunshine of the bright day, she had put her own sorrow far from her, and was thinking only of Joy. Her first impulse was to start at once for Richmond. If people were to be made glad it should be swiftly done. Those who bring good tidings should not let the grass grow under their feet.

“I must see Joy this very day,” she

said to her friends. "Now she will know that her George was really innocent. How I long to see her! If father could have been here!"

Lady Colinette's eyes beamed for an instant. From their first meeting she had taken Godiva into her heart with a feeling more tender and lasting than the ordinary friendship between a girl and an older woman. Already this impatience to see Joy had swept away the barrier which had kept Godiva out of Richmond. If she were once back again at Garden Lodge, caressed and made much of by the aunts who loved her so truly, might she not learn to think of Rex with a softening of heart?

"I will go with you," Colinette said promptly, "and Mr. Douglas will send a message to Mrs. Errington, telling her that we shall not return till this evening.

Do not think that your friends will be troubled with me, Godiva. There is a house by the river in which I shall be welcomed."

"I will do your bidding," said Amyot Douglas. "Mrs. Errington shall have the message; but you must let me join you in your little expedition. A few hours of country air will set me up for my Sunday services."

Godiva felt that she was glad to have companions with whom she might talk or keep silence. To her it was no small thing to know that her own happiness was not everything in her life. She could live and rejoice in other lives. If it was her fate to be unloved and neglected, she could rise above her unsatisfied yearnings. Colinette looked at her earnestly, and saw the light of peace on her face.

Her friends left her at the door of Garden Lodge, and walked away across the fields to a house lower down the river. Their path lay through sweet tumbled grass, full of shiny buttercups and moon-daisies ; and as they went they talked of things present and things past. Godiva's name was very often on their lips ; these two forgot themselves in caring for the young lives around them ; and perhaps this was why their own youth seemed to linger with them still.

Godiva knocked, and Joy opened the door. At the sight of the girl's clear, contented face the visitor paused abruptly on the threshold. She was not misled by Joy's outward calm ; she knew that thankfulness and resignation had done their perfect work ; but these peaceful, grateful hearts are not prone to forget.

The sisters were sitting down to

luncheon, and the dining-room door was shut. Godiva laid her hand on the maid's shoulder.

"Joy, I have news for you," she said. "Do you remember Emily West? It was she who stole the ten-pound note. She is dying in a hospital, and we have taken down her statement. And George is innocent—quite innocent. After you had left the Lingham's he went to their house to see you, and Emily sent him away."

"Sent him away!" The soft flush died out of Joy's face; her blue eyes opened wide. "Then I shall never find him; I can never ask him to forgive me for having wronged him in my thoughts!"

"Mr. Douglas will try to find him; we will all try. Oh, Joy, don't you realize that there is no stain on your character now? The Lingham's will have to con-

fess themselves mistaken; they must return the money that you paid. Is not this a great triumph for you?"

But Joy could think only of her George. "If I could but see him before I die!" she said.

The sound of voices drew Miss Charlotte out of the dining-room. At sight of Godiva she executed a little dance and burst into exclamations of delight, betraying a want of dignity which was most displeasing to her sister. Henrietta loved to live in a hush, in which the harshest sound was a bird-note, or the sigh of a low wind through the leaves. Moreover, it was impossible to over-estimate the value of peace at meal-times. Godiva was a welcome guest, dear girl; but let her come in quietly and take her seat at the table.

Godiva did as she was bidden, thinking

that the return to Garden Lodge was not as hard as she had feared it would be. Rushing in, in this unceremonious fashion, she had escaped all the usual little formalities, and her tidings would divert the aunts' thoughts from their nephew.

She began to tell of her visit to the hospital, and explain her unexpected appearance, but Miss Henrietta stopped her by a stately wave of her mittened hand.

"Not yet, my child. Nothing exciting while we are eating, if you please. Charlotte, I will trouble you for another cutlet. My sister is so easily exhilarated, Godiva; I often tell her that she is too giddy for her years."

Miss Charlotte gave further proof of giddiness by giggling at the head of the table, unable to repress her satisfaction at having a young face to look at again.

Miss Henrietta glanced at her with mild severity.

“You are so frivolous, Charlotte,” she murmured, with a sigh.

“I wish Godiva had my share of frivolity,” said Charlotte, with twinkling brown eyes. “She is too quiet—too grave.”

“I like grave people,” Henrietta remarked; “they always leave you at peace. I hope Godiva will not grow up a noisy woman.”

“She is grown up already; she won’t grow any more. How you forget!” cried Charlotte.

The faintest shadow of a frown flitted across Henrietta’s dove-like countenance.

“There is such a thing as mental growth, and—hem—growing in grace,” she said, with gentle superiority. “My memory does not fail me yet, thank God!”

Then she finished her cutlet with an air of mild triumph, and Charlotte really felt that her sister had sat upon her, and got the better of her.

When luncheon was over, Henrietta (a little more stately in her carriage than usual) repaired to the shady drawing-room. The creepers, hanging over the window, grew thicker year after year because the ladies objected to pruning; the gardener, they said, never knew when to stop when they let him begin. And so the old house was almost hidden under Nature's lavish bounties, and seemed to be in danger, like the palace of the Sleeping Princess, of disappearing altogether from mortal sight.

"Let us come upstairs and talk," whispered Miss Charlotte in Godiva's ear. "We have put some pretty new chintz in your room, and I want you to look

at it. Besides, Henrietta must have her nap."

Not without a pang did Godiva enter that room again. It was but little changed by the new chintz; the rose-crowned ewer and basin still stood on the washstand; the real roses outside still nodded at the open window, and sent in breaths of sweetness. She thought of the first days of her bitter sorrow, and of the subtle comfort that seemed to steal into her heart in this very room. She remembered the flowers which Rex had gathered, and Joy had brought to her bedside. Her silence puzzled Miss Charlotte for a moment.

"Don't you like the chintz, my dear?" she asked.

"Indeed I do," Godiva answered quickly. "I think this is the prettiest room I have ever seen. I shall never like any other as well."

“It is always yours.” Charlotte put her arm round the girl’s slender waist, and drew her nearer to the window. “Sit down here for a few minutes before you go out into the garden. I know you want to finish your talk with Joy; but you can give me a little time.”

“As much time as you please,” replied Godiva, smiling, and putting out her hand for a rose. Her heart was throbbing; she was waiting to hear Rex’s name.

Miss Charlotte’s brown eyes were suddenly dim.

“My dear, it is so pleasant to see you sitting there,” she said, with a tremble in her voice. “I believe I am getting a foolish old woman, always fancying changes in those I love. The old dread change above all things; they don’t like to see the children grow up, and the

young people become cold and worldly and middle-aged. They love a monotonous life."

"Dear Miss Charlotte, surely you did not think *me* changed?" Godiva asked.

"You must forgive me if I feared that it was so, child. A thousand times I have wished that you had never left us. If you had not gone to Silversea, Rex would never have cared to visit the place. And if he——"

"Life is always full of 'ifs,'" Godiva interrupted, trying to speak lightly.

"Oh, Rex is so sadly altered!" Charlotte's tears began to fall at last. "I hope Henrietta won't notice that my eyes are red; I never can cry without showing it! My dear, I am made quite miserable by his—his absurd pursuit of that Espinasse creature. He does not love her, you know; it is a case of infatua-

tion. A wholesome love never really injures one; but infatuation means blight. Already Joseph complains that Rex neglects business. This madness has taken possession of him, body and mind; and the girl does not care a straw about him."

Godiva sat quite still, holding the rose that she had gathered. When she spoke her voice sounded formal and hard.

"I am sorry for him, Miss Charlotte; that is all I can say," she said. "Does he never come to see you?"

"Very seldom." Charlotte dried her tears; Godiva's manner had chilled her. "He knows that his conduct is giving us great pain. There is nothing that interests him now; he wastes time and brains and money on this folly."

Godiva's quick instinct told her that Charlotte had expected more sympathy

than she had received. She got up suddenly and impulsively, and kissed her old friend.

“Dear,” she said, “you must pray that the spell may be broken; but you cannot break it with your own hands. He is like Earl Harold in the poem, and she is the Weird Ladye. It was not until

‘Mary mother she stooped from heaven’
that Harold was awakened out of his dream.”

Miss Charlotte was fond of poetry, and always remembered Charles Kingsley’s verses.

“But the earl did not wake till

‘The rust had eaten his harness bright,’
and his own ladye lay in her coffin,” she said sorrowfully. “The true love does not always wait for the false one’s spell to break. While the earl dreams she finds wings.”

Godiva was not ready with a reply. She knew that her friends were waiting hopefully for the dream to end; but her heart did not soften as Lady Colinette had thought that it would. Her true yet loving soul could not comprehend inconstancy; nor could she, as Miss Charlotte did, discriminate between love and infatuation. The strong and patient devotion of Jacob to Rachel was the only kind of love that, to her mind, seemed worthy to be accepted by a good woman.

The afternoon waned slowly; Amyot Douglas and Colinette came back through the fields in a dreamy calm. They enjoyed everything that day—the languid rustle of the leaves, the warmth of the air and the sweet perfumes in it, the gleam of the river between the trees.

“Is this a dream?” said Amyot at last. “Can it be only a few hours since

we stood in the hospital ward? We must make the most of every second here, and enjoy it to the utmost."

"I am doing that," she answered. "Just for a little while I am letting all doubts and anxieties lie at rest; even the doubts about dear Godiva. Here is a little house with open doors! I don't know many things sweeter than to look through a small dark cottage into a garden. It is like looking through a narrow life into the paradise beyond."

CHAPTER IV.

“ IT IS NOT, AND IT CANNOT COME TO,
GOOD.”

THE early summer was past; the richest roses had flowered themselves to death; and the season, like a clock that is nearly run down, was preparing for a long standstill. A good many things had been settled, satisfactorily or unsatisfactorily, but there were other matters which certain clever people had not quite succeeded in getting off their hands. Lady Whitmarsh, sipping her chocolate upstairs in her house in Curzon Street, was thinking of the young beauty downstairs, who had not yet accomplished her destiny.

“It is not my fault,” the dowager soliloquized with some annoyance. “The girl is my own sister’s child, and I have done all that could be done. Why hasn’t Sir Anthony Dunn proposed to my niece? It must be that he is not sure of his ground; and yet, why shouldn’t he be sure?”

Any unsophisticated rustic, looking at Sir Anthony, would have answered that question without a moment’s hesitation. He was a brand-new baronet with a hundred thousand a year, whose name was to be found on committees of charitable societies, and whose face was to be seen at all public feasts; but then, what a face it was! In his early days, perhaps, when he had swept up his master’s shop, and gone home on a Saturday night to take his wages to a tired mother, there might have been a soul in that face. But

a man cannot live a grasping, pushing, elbowing life from twenty to fifty without putting an extinguisher upon his soul.

At fifty he had got money ; and the ten years that followed were filled up with labour of another kind. He that had gathered now scattered ; he who had pushed now politely ceded the road to others ; he who had elbowed now stood aside, hat in hand. And these last ten years were not less hardening than the years that had gone before ; but they won him a baronetcy.

At thirty Anthony Dunn had done like the 'prentice in the ballad—he had married his master's daughter. She had brought him gold, and had walked with him "in silk attire" for many a year ; but somehow the silk attire had never suited the wearer. Mrs. Dunn was coarse of grain

by nature, and did not take the world's polish kindly. Perhaps when Anthony saw her poor hard-featured face lit up by diamonds, and heard her rasping tones replying to the smooth accents of royalty, he thought of a first sweetheart of his. If perchance he had married the girl with the gentle grey eyes and quiet voice, his path through the devious ways of society might have been easier to tread. But the short cut to wealth often lies over a man's heart. If the road to hell is paved with good intentions, surely the road to success is paved with early loves, trodden down and trampled upon ere men can reach their goal.

Mrs. Dunn died, and was buried with all due pomp; but her real mourners were few. Released from the galling tie, the widower found himself more popular than he had ever been before. When the

baronetcy was conferred on him he basked in the light of ladies' eyes, and saw younger men retire into the background, leaving the first place for him. His wealth increased; he was flattered on all sides, and at sixty he fancied himself almost young in spite of time.

Then came a day when a new face, fresh as a May rose, was seen among the familiar society faces. Belle Espinasse was young, beautiful, well-born, and poor. She was the girl for him; he did not want to take a second rich wife. As to Lady Whitmarsh, she smiled on him as a good chaperon should, and never failed to give him opportunities. Why then had he not proposed?

Perhaps Belle herself might have replied to this question, if she had cared to do so. Downstairs, in the dingy breakfast-room, she was drinking her coffee

with a discontented look which rarely visited her beautiful face. To do Belle justice, she was seldom out of temper. With perfect health and extraordinary beauty, she had always felt sure of getting the very things she wanted most. But now that the golden casket was opened all ready to receive the gem, why did not the gem permit itself to be placed within the coveted shrine?

“I don’t understand your tactics, Belle,” said a querulous voice from the other side of the table. “Your aunt wrote to summon me to town, and I thought, of course, that something was to be settled. She thinks that you are playing with your mouse — a childish trick, and one can foresee the end of childish tricks.”

General Espinasse was getting very old indeed; his features were pinched and

sharpened ; he had given up the attempt to hide his stoop ; but he had not wholly lost the keen sight for which he had been noted in the old campaigning days. Belle was a shade paler than usual ; her brown eyes shunned his ; her lips were more set than he had ever seen them. She trifled with her breakfast and said nothing.

“Young Longworthy has been about with you a good deal, I hear,” the general went on. “It’s too bad of you, Belle, to trifle with the boy ; upon my word it is ! You could have sent him off if you had liked. But you girls are no better than a lot of juggernauts. It’s downright inhuman.”

Miss Espinasse arched her dark brows, and shot a languid glance through her eye-lashes.

“Don’t be so fierce, grandpa,” she said calmly. “If girls will be girls, boys

will be boys, you know. As to Mr. Longworthy, I really think you must blame yourself for that intimacy; you encouraged him more than I did at first."

"I liked to talk over old times with him. The lad is a nice lad, Belle, and a gentleman."

The delicate rose died out of Belle's cheeks for once. She felt that the old man's eyes were reading her through and through.

"Belle," he said, in a voice that trembled, "the lad is a gentleman, and upon my honour the race is almost extinct. As to the other—well, I didn't know what a cad he was till I'd seen him. Your aunt may say what she pleases, but I'll never force you into a match with Dunn. Take Rex if you care for him, and live the kind of life that the Almighty meant you to live when He created you."

Miss Espinasse put up a white hand to loosen the fold of lace round her neck as if it was choking her, and her face was pale as a lily. The coldest hearts can thaw sometimes; and even a fashionable beauty may have some tender spot which shrinks from a touch.

“My dear grandpa,” she said, rising and going to the window, “there is nothing more silly than to be led away by romantic fancies. As to the Almighty’s intentions respecting me, I don’t know anything about them, and I have never heard them satisfactorily explained. I came to town, I believe, to marry the richest man I could meet, and I’m going to do it.”

The general leaned his arms upon the table with a heavy sigh. People had spoken of him in his youth as a stern man; but he had never been as stern to

any one as this girl was to herself. In a groping way he had been trying of late to reach the light. Before he went out of the world he wanted to feel that his grandchild was treading a clear path, bright with honest sunshine ; but Belle had chosen her own way. Her cynical speech had shocked him, and his face looked so grey and old that its expression almost startled her.

“ Never trouble about me, grandpa,” she said, speaking more gently. “ I shall manage very well. Aunt Helena shan’t be kept in suspense any longer. Everything will be settled comfortably to-day at Mrs. Howe’s garden party.”

Then she went quickly out of the room, shutting the door behind her.

The day glided away. The general pottered out and met some old military acquaintances who diverted his mind

from anxious thoughts. Belle went off to the garden party in high spirits; the rich soft bloom had returned to her cheeks; even Lady Whitmarsh, who had grown accustomed to her beauty, was struck by its splendour. She was a little paler when she came back; but her aunt wore an air of unmistakable triumph.

“It is all right,” the dowager whispered to the general. “He spoke definitely to her this afternoon, and she accepted him. Poor girl, she is just a little bored and tired; but we must go to Lady Wilmer’s to-night. He will be there.”

General Espinasse said little in reply, nor did he seem eager to congratulate his granddaughter. They dined at home that evening at seven; Lady Whitmarsh, full of arch allusions and gay smiles, pressed Belle to eat; but

that young lady's healthy appetite seemed for once to have failed her.

"I hope it will turn out all right, upon my word I do, Helena," the general said anxiously when Miss Espinasse had gone to her room.

Lady Whitmarsh looked at him in astonishment.

"Why, father, should there be any doubt?" she inquired. "He is not exactly an attractive man——"

"Attractive! No, I should think not," said the old soldier, looking very grim. "You never mentioned the disparity of age when you wrote to me about his attentions. And he is *such* a cad. There's an oiliness in his manner which makes me want to kick him."

Lady Whitmarsh was seriously offended.

"It is not too late to break off the

match, father, if you wish to do it," she replied. "He is quite the most eligible man I know. Belle has been a fearful responsibility, and I hate chaperoning. As to his age, I don't think Belle objects to it in the least. But if you have taken such a dislike to him you had better tell her so."

The general answered nothing, but got up and went out into the open air to shake off his worries as best he could. Just outside the street-door he encountered Rex Longworthy.

"You are going in there, are you?" said the old man, laying a friendly hand on his shoulder. "They're dressing for somebody's ball, I think."

"They are always dressing for somebody's ball." Rex tried to speak in his old pleasant way. "But it will be over soon; the season's on its last legs."

"Yes, it will be over soon," repeated the general, with a quaver in his voice. "I won't stay here prosing, my boy; I'm prone to do it when I come out for my evening saunter. Good-bye."

Belle had finished her toilet quickly, and was in the drawing-room alone when Rex went in. She was standing near the window, buttoning one of her long gloves, and was robed richly in cream silk and lace.

"Let me do that for you," he said.

She hesitated for an instant, and then held out her wrist. To Rex, who had often rendered her this little service before, there was something novel in that slight shade of hesitation. He was longer over the glove-buttoning than he ought to have been, and a certain vague sense of coming ill overshadowed him.

"Thank you for sending me those lovely flowers," she said quietly.

His glance, following hers, rested upon a bouquet which he had sent that very afternoon, and which was placed in a crystal urn, filled with water. And then he caught sight of a superb bunch of exotics lying on a table near the window where she stood.

“Won’t you carry my flowers to-night?” he asked, with a ring of pain in his tone.

As he spoke he looked at her, but only to find her smiling, although her breath came a little quickly, and her cheeks wore a vivid rose-flush.

“No,” she said in a gentle, languid voice. “And you mustn’t send me any more.”

She took up the bunch of rare exotics for a second, and then laid it down again with a faint sigh.

“Belle,” he cried suddenly, “those

flowers came from him ! You are going to marry him ? You have promised ? ”

“ Yes,” she answered very quietly.

He turned and walked to the other end of the room ; then came back, and stood quite still before her.

“ Treat me as you like, Belle,” he said ; “ it is yourself I ask you to think of, not of me. Don’t be cruel to yourself ; don’t murder every good feeling that is in you. Keep a little truth—a little tenderness—alive, for God’s sake ! ”

She withdrew a step and leaned against the side of the table, letting her long lashes veil her eyes.

“ It may save us both trouble if I speak plainly,” she began after a brief pause. “ Rex, you are a foolish boy, and you persist in believing in my good qualities. In fact, you have believed so much that you have almost persuaded me sometimes

that I am good [and tender and true—almost, never quite. You fell in love with my face, and you must needs make up an ideal character to match the face. But it won't do. I am a very worthless, worldly creature.”

“Belle!” he murmured sadly.

“I am not deceiving you,” she went on resolutely. “I want you to know that you lose nothing in losing me. Do you suppose that Sir Anthony is going to be supremely blest? Oh, Rex, what does it all matter? It is a world of humbug and sham, a stupid, worn-out old world, in which we pretend to enjoy ourselves and don't. The thing is, we *are* in it; and so we must make as good a show as we can.”

Lady Whitmarsh's voice, speaking outside the door, recalled Rex to himself at that moment. He spoke no word of fare-

well, but went out of the room and out of the house, carrying with him a vision of the beautiful girl in her ball-dress, and the hothouse flowers upon the table. When he found himself walking fast along the street, it was this picture which remained in his mind, and no other. Looking up to the pure evening light that yet lingered in the sky above the house-tops, he saw it still. And when at last he reached his quiet room in Barnard's Inn, and threw himself into his favourite chair, he saw it still.

The old laundress, who had waited for years on the tenants of these chambers, had set the lighted lamp upon the table, and it was burning steadily under a rose-coloured shade. The window was open: out of doors was the soft darkness of a summer night; the plane trees kept up a low rustle, and the mignonette scented

the air. Rex looked round absently at his books and pictures, just visible in the shaded light; and then—quite suddenly and inconsequently—his thoughts went back to his grandfather's old vicarage, where he had silently fought the first battle of his life.

It had seemed to him, in those early days, as if such a struggle must be followed by a whole lifetime of peace. He had done well ever since, adapting himself to circumstances, doing his duty bravely, winning praise where praise was seldom bestowed. And unconsciously he had grown to look upon himself as a very good sort of fellow indeed; a fellow who had no fancy for sowing wild oats, and giving trouble to his relatives. He had found it was quite possible for a man to live peacefully and comfortably after giving up a cherished desire.

But what had he been doing of late? Not fighting, certainly. He had not realized how necessary it is, now and then, to have a good battle with one's inclinations and temptations. From the very beginning of his infatuation he had known that Belle Espinasse was not for him—ay, and an inner voice had whispered that she was not the chosen companion of his soul. But her glowing beauty had lured him on, as the rich flower lures the child; and then came fever and want, and bitter humiliation and pain.

Perhaps the humiliation was all the deeper, and the pain all the sharper, because he had never looked upon himself, nor been looked on by others, as a susceptible man. There had been something a little formal in his manner to women; a stately courtesy which is rarely

met with in the cheery, chaffing young men of to-day. Girls admired his dark, proud face, and thought that he looked like some one in a poem or a tragedy; but they hardly expected such a lofty hero to descend to common love-making.

He *had* descended; and she, for whom he had stooped, had given him nothing but a few soft words and bright smiles. Again he saw her, in the creamy silk and lace, lifting Sir Anthony's flowers with a significant gesture; again he heard her saying, in her sweet, languid voice, what a worthless, worldly creature she was.

But now that he was once more in the quiet of his room, there came back to him certain memories which made the scene he had left behind unreal. Now that he was alone he found himself face to face again with the old innocent ideal whose gentle eyes followed him with a rebuking

gaze. He began to have odd fancies about this feeling. It was as if he had left a pure spiritual presence in this silent room, and found it here, waiting for him when he returned.

Before this presence, meek and pale as it was, the splendid beauty of Belle began to fade. If Belle herself could have looked into Rex's heart that night she would have understood him better than he understood himself. It was not her influence which could have changed and coloured all his life for him. By-and-by he would look back upon his passion for her as a mere episode, which might have formed a part of any man's experience. Morris Durleigh, with his strong, self-renouncing soul, was still a living force ; and Godiva, with her tender words and ways, had never been really dethroned.

He went to the open window, and gathered a piece of mignonette. The night was cool and fresh; solitude and silence calmed his perturbed spirit. "Lead, kindly Light"—how strangely and sweetly the old words came back! his heart was aching still; he had not ceased to suffer; yet he was conscious that the pain would be brief.

Belle Espinasse was very silent as they drove to their destination that night. Once or twice as the street lights flashed into the carriage, they showed Lady Whitmarsh an unwonted sight. Belle was leaning back in her corner with closed eyes, her flowers lying untouched in her lap. She was pale, and it seemed to the dowager as if she had suddenly given up some strong hold which she had always kept upon her outer self. Lady Whitmarsh was frightened.

“What is the matter, my dear?” she asked anxiously. “Are you over-tired?”

As if by magic the girl woke up again in a moment. She smiled, drew her soft white wrap round her shoulders, and declared gaily that she was not in the least tired, and meant to enjoy herself.

CHAPTER V.

“ OH, TELL HER BRIEF IS LIFE, BUT LOVE
IS LONG.”

It was a surprise to Joseph Kemple when his nephew walked into the office next morning at an early hour. He was too wise, however, to express the satisfaction he really felt at this return of good habits. Moreover, he said to himself that there might be a relapse. But when he had scanned the young man's set face, and read the expression of resolution there, he began to believe in him again. Rex was paler and more worn than ever; last night had not been more restless

than other nights, but now there was no longer any feverish glow of excitement to veil the ravages that restlessness had made.

The day wore away. Rex had got himself well in hand, and worked steadily. It is true that he worked in a dull way, without interest or enjoyment; but he exerted all his will-force, and succeeded in fixing his attention on his business. Once or twice it flashed across him that he was living in a tame, colourless world; but the thought only spurred him on to renewed exertion. Jaded and spent as he was, the atmosphere of the office almost sickened him, but he endured it manfully.

"I had a line from Charlotte this morning," said Joseph Kemple, looking furtively at his nephew.

Rex had taken up his hat, and was pre-

paring to go home. But he paused when his uncle spoke.

“Are they quite well at Garden Lodge?” he asked mechanically.

“No; it seems that Henrietta is ailing. She has not left her room for three days,” Joseph answered.

Rex turned a grave face towards him. “I’m afraid I’ve neglected my aunts lately,” he said in a quiet voice; “but I will go down to Richmond this very afternoon.”

“That’s right.” It was seldom that Joseph showed such evident satisfaction. “They have been asking for you.”

Rex was stung by a pang of remorse. The Kemples had born his neglect very patiently; no one had been severe on him, and yet he had deserved an ample share of severity. If Joseph Kemple understood the young man’s feelings at this moment

he made no sign. Perhaps he saw deeper into Rex's heart than any one knew. Anyhow, he had not reproached him, but had let him go on his way, and waited quietly for a return to the old path.

Already the news of Sir Anthony Dunn's engagement had spread far and wide. Everybody who had been at Mrs. Howe's garden party knew that he had proposed, and that Miss Espinasse had accepted him. Sir Anthony himself had industriously circulated the good tidings. He wanted the fact of his approaching bliss to be widely known. All sorts and conditions of men had been hovering round the flower of the season, and some of them had drawn a good deal nearer than he had liked. So he announced his happiness without delay, and it travelled speedily down to Richmond, and penetrated even into the seclusion of Garden

Lodge. A lady who had been at the Howe's party called to inquire for Miss Kemple, and was received by Charlotte.

"The beautiful Miss Espinasse ; yes, I have heard of her," said Miss Charlotte, with much inward satisfaction. "We have a young friend staying with us who knows her quite well."

When the caller was gone Miss Charlotte skipped out into the garden to find Godiva. She skipped a good deal now that Henrietta was upstairs, and could no longer see and reprove her frivolous performances. Godiva, who was sauntering slowly under overarching boughs, saw her coming down the long path with many a little hop and jump, and guessed that she had something of importance to tell.

When Henrietta was taken ill Godiva had willingly consented to go and stay

with the sisters. Lady Colinette had strongly objected to her returning to Silversea till her health was thoroughly established. Uncle Hugh had utterly failed to trace his missing daughter, and although Sybil's condition had greatly improved, they were a sorrowful household at Albert Villa. And so Godiva, finding that she was really needed at Richmond, was glad to remain there. She had got over the first shock of seeing old scenes with a changed spirit; her heart had calmed itself, and was taking up the good things that were left.

She smiled at the sight of Miss Charlotte's eager face; not for a moment did she suppose that the news would concern her greatly, but she prepared herself to listen with a show of interest.

"Mrs. Reeve has just called," Charlotte panted out. "A thorough society woman,

my dear—as empty as the wind. She met Belle Espinasse at Mrs. Howe's garden party yesterday; every one was raving about her beauty."

"Well, it is worth raving about," said Godiva quietly.

"And worth a high price!" Miss Charlotte took breath, and spoke deliberately. "Sir Anthony Dunn thinks so; he has laid himself and his fortune at her feet. She has accepted him, of course. What a blow for our foolish boy!"

Godiva's lips tightened a little; but she received the news with outward calm. It was a relief, just then, to see Joy running down the walk. Miss Henrietta had awakened from her afternoon nap, and was calling for her sister.

There was leisure for the girl to think over the news in solitude and silence. The end had come to a wild dream; the

spell was broken, and Rex was free ; but all this made but little difference to Godiva. She was glad for his sake, and for the sakes of those who loved him. She wished him well, and hoped he would not be falling into any more foolish infatuations. But he could never give her back something which she had lost, and lost through him. What was it? Something that the worldly-wise would have laughed to scorn : just a girl's faith in a man's superiority — just a loving belief in one who seemed to be sent to her as a protector and guide.

It had been a warm, cloudy day. The air was almost too heavy with the scent of flowers ; not a breath of wind stirred the full, dark foliage. The little house felt hot and close, and Godiva was not sorry to escape from it, and carry her books into the garden. But she did not care much

for reading just then ; and presently she left the volumes lying on a seat, and began to pace the long walk again.

How long she sauntered there she did not know. Thoughts, fancies, pictures, came crowding into her mind. She fell to wondering how Belle would live the new life which she had chosen for herself, and then called up a vision of that beautiful queenly face and figure in bridal array. She would get the things she had wanted, Godiva thought, but would they cease to please when she had them within her hold ? Was it in Belle's nature to care for anything very long ?

The scent of the honeysuckle, growing abundantly in this old garden, filled the air ; she had gathered a bunch, and fastened it into her gown. Her gipsy hat was lying on the seat with her books ; her soft, rough hair, bright with golden

touches, was uncovered, and her face, now faintly flushed, looked fair and girlish again. Rex, coming slowly along the path, saw her strolling under the trees, and almost forgot, in that moment, the wild dream that had divided them. She was the little Godiva of happier days, gentle and sweet as when he had seen her first in this paradise of old-fashioned blossoms and leafy boughs.

She was looking down at the criss-cross of lights and shades at her feet, and thinking that one's life seemed to pass in struggling from shadow to sunshine, from sun to shadow; you never lingered long in light or dark. Suddenly she looked up, with a start, and there was Rex.

"Godiva," he said, "it is the greatest comfort to find you here. I heard only this morning of poor Aunt Henrietta's illness."

“I think she will get better.” She spoke quietly, and gave him her hand in a natural way. “At first we were anxious, but we believe the danger is past.”

“I hope so. Aunt Charlotte seems bright enough. How sweet the old place is!”

He drew a deep breath of woodbine sweetness, and took off his hat to feel the air. How changed he was! Every feature seemed to have undergone a change; the eyes were larger, and the nose and chin sharpened. She wondered if he was very miserable—if he had heard that Belle’s fate was sealed? Yes, of course, he had heard it. Charlotte had said that he knew all which concerned Miss Espinasse.

“It is very sweet,” she said. “I am glad to get away from the sea, and have

plenty of flowers. I never saw the myrtles so full of bloom ; you must come and look at them."

"Presently," he answered. "Just now I hardly care to move from this spot. Was there ever such a wealth of honeysuckle? Ah, I see you have not given up your old habit of wearing flowers! Do you know that you are looking remarkably well? It is good for you to leave Silversea and its troubles."

"I am not fond of Silversea," she owned. "And yet——"

"It is a detestable place," he interrupted. "I wish I had never persuaded you to go there."

"It was right for me to go." She spoke firmly. "My father knew that there was work there for me to do."

"No, no ; it was all a mistake. Godiva, you ought to have remained here

with us. Your home was here. I was a fool when I urged you to go away."

She shook her head, with a smile and a little sigh.

"You are not in touch with me and my life, Rex. Our paths have been so far apart that you cannot see what good has come to me through obeying my father's wish."

"No, I can't see the good," he confessed shortly. "Your presence was needed with us. The aunts have never ceased to long for you, and I—have been going wrong without you."

She looked at him gently and gravely. "I am sorry if you have gone wrong," she answered. "But I could not have prevented it. It is not too late, is it, to take the right path again?"

"It is not too late, but I have lost confidence in myself," he said, moving

slowly towards the seat where she had left her hat and books. "Let us sit down here, shall we? It is a long while since we have had a talk. And somehow you didn't talk much to me when I came to Silversea, Godiva. You were tired and preoccupied."

"Yes," she admitted, "I was tired."

They seated themselves on the bench at the end of the garden, which overlooked the river. Just as of old, there were young couples walking along the towing-path; gay voices calling; children laughing now and then. But the two who sat there under the trees were both feeling as if they had nothing more to do with youth. They looked at each other for a moment with strange eyes, and sighed.

"Godiva," said Rex abruptly, "there's no good in going over the past few months. I wish I had lived them dif-

ferently ; but every life is full of regrets. And, as you were saying, it is not too late to take the right path again."

Although he spoke hopeful words, they were uttered in a cheerless tone. The fever-time had left lassitude and depression behind ; he could not get back his old manliness all at once. Godiva pitied him ; but his little speech did not draw her spirit nearer to his.

"Of course, it is not too late," she replied. "Don't let it ever be said that Rex Longworthy's life went wrong, and he never tried to set it to rights. That is what must be said of some people ; they don't make any effort to effect a change for the better. But you have a great deal of pluck and resolution, Rex—anyhow, my father thought so," she added, as if she were not quite so sure as she might have been once.

He turned his haggard face towards her again, and saw the compassion in her clear grey eyes. She looked sweet and delicate and pure in her simple black gown, with a narrow ruffle round her slender throat. What a calm life a man might live with such a woman as this ! No wild struggles to get into society ; for her society meant just the friends she loved, and God's poor. No craving after admiration and popularity ; for her it was enough if kind eyes looked approval. A true woman is easily contented ; because her longings are for those sweet, common joys that God meant all men and women to have for their very own.

“ There is a time to speak, and a time to keep silence.” A time when our good angel, if he be near, lays his invisible finger on the lips that would let out hasty words. A time when love itself

should hide deep in the heart, instead of leaping into speech. A time to cover, and a time to disclose. If only Rex had smothered his impulse just then !

“ Godiva,” he said, “ will you help me to begin afresh ? I want you with me always, dear. Do not let us part any more.”

Worn and wasted as he was, with his dark eyes questioning her, he looked the tragic hero to the life. It might have been a scene in a play, with that quaint old garden for a background, and, in front, the girl slight and pale, the lover dark and intense. Any looker-on would have said that the man could not fail to win the thing he asked for ; she looked so capable of clinging tenderness, and he of protecting devotion.

“ I cannot help you, Rex.” She spoke low, but her voice was steady and clear. “ You must seek help from God, and find

out your own strength and weakness, and live your life as it should be lived. But there is nothing now that I can do for you—nothing.”

It was an answer of which he had never dreamed. Tossed on the stormy sea of passion, he had caught distant glimpses of a haven waiting for him; spent with grasping at shadows, he had believed that a sweet reality might still be his. And at this moment he forgot all his folly, all the time and feeling that he had wasted, and remembered only that he wanted Godiva, and that she had denied herself to him.

“Are you in earnest, really in earnest? Can you give me no hope?” he said in a deep tone of entreaty. “Godiva, you are cruel; you punish me.”

“No.” Her voice quivered a little, and she looked away to the river.

“Perhaps I deserve punishment. I have seemed indifferent; I permitted myself to be drawn into a foolish intimacy with—— But you know all about that, Godiva. It was my fault, and I must suffer for it. You feel that you cannot trust me?”

“Not that, Rex. I dare say you will profit by your experience.”

She said it quietly, as if she had thought it out. He chafed at her coolness.

“Then you are unforgiving,” he cried bitterly. “I thought you cared for me once. Was I mistaken? Did you never care at all?”

She turned to him suddenly, her large eyes unnaturally bright—burning blushes on her cheeks.

“What if I did?” she asked. “If you had any love for me you flung it away, and left me to fight against my

feelings as I might. I will have a man's whole heart, Rex, or none at all. I will not take the shreds and remnants of his love. You can offer me nothing now that is worthy of my acceptance."

It is not often that an offer of marriage is received with such an outright refusal. These two, who had come within an ace of being made one, now stood looking at each other with indignant glances. They had both risen. She, with her burning cheeks and flashing eyes, seemed altogether a new creature; he, with his head thrown back and his dark brows drawn down, looked something like an insulted prince of old romance.

"It is the last time that you shall be troubled with such a worthless offering," he said, with a very creditable attempt to steady his voice. "I apologize for my lamentable mistake."

He lifted his hat gracefully, and walked off at a dignified pace up the long path.

He was gone, really gone: he had vowed that he would never trouble her any more, and she ought to have been unfeignedly thankful for the promise of future peace. Yet, as she sat down on the bench again, some fictitious feeling which had sustained her suddenly melted away out of her heart, and left a great emptiness and anguish there.

She could not tell in her confusion and misery whether she had done right or wrong. She could not tell whether she had rejected a pearl of price or thrown away a cheap imitation. She could only realize that, good or bad, real or sham, it was gone for ever, and there was nothing to put in its place.

CHAPTER VI.

“ALAS, HOW HARDLY THINGS GO RIGHT!”

A WEEK had gone by since the parting of Godiva and Rex, and her mind was still in a state of miserable confusion and indecision. She was as far as ever from knowing whether she had done right or wrong. But of one thing she was quite sure—if she had done a right thing she had been wrong in her manner of doing it.

If they had but parted peacefully, how much easier it would have been to live her life! If she had held out just the merest thread of hope of some future

re-union, would not that thread have become a golden cord to draw two hearts together? Of course she had shown spirit, and behaved with proper pride ; but pride, whether proper or improper, is but a poor consoler in our hours of loneliness and regret.

Amyot Douglas had kept his promise to the dying woman, and Emily West had heard her pardon spoken by Joy's own lips. And that was not all. Mr. Douglas had gone to Notting Hill, and carried Emily's confession to the Lingham. As to Captain Lingham, that irascible naval officer was compelled to eat more humble pie than he had ever swallowed in his life, and it proved to be a wholesome diet for him. Mrs. Lingham was tearful and repentant, and expressed the utmost readiness to receive Joy into her household again. She had never

been so well suited before. Mr. Douglas, however, explained that Joy was not in need of a situation : her own mistresses would not hear of parting with her.

And now, like a true knight ever ready to come to the help of a distressed damsel, he set himself to accomplish another task. Joy's George must be found.

"There is a great deal to be done in the world," said Lady Colinette. "If 'Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do,' he does not leave busy hands without occupation. Do you know, Mr. Douglas, that you look as if Satan—or somebody else—had been giving you a good many affairs of other people's to look after?"

"How do you know that they are not my own affairs?" he inquired.

"Because you never have any affairs

of your own. You have ‘a heart at leisure from itself,’” she answered promptly. “Is it anywhere recorded by John Bunyan that Greatheart attended to his own concerns? He was always coming and going with the weaker pilgrims—always drawing his sword in their defence—never for himself. If he was wounded in any of his numerous fights he made no fuss. Once, when Giant Maul had well-nigh struck him down and Christiana asked if he had caught any hurt, he made light of it, saying, ‘No, save a little on my flesh.’ Of all true knights of whom I have ever read,” added Colinette with a quiet enthusiasm, “I think Greatheart is the truest and the finest. The wonderful tinker has given us the best ideal of chivalry.”

She gave him some tea, and then sat

with her hands in her lap, pondering over many things in silence. He glanced at her with an amused look.

“Have you found any new pilgrims to be conducted to the Celestial City?” he asked at last.

“No—yes, a tribe of children. Such an astounding thing has come to pass! Mrs. Errington says that she doesn’t want to wait till after she’s dead to do good.”

“Well, I can understand that kind of feeling,” said Amyot Douglas, apparently making a strong mental effort.

“I don’t want you to understand her feelings—I simply want you to listen to my plans,” cried Colinette impatiently. “Do you know that close to Garden Lodge at Richmond there is an empty house? Not a fine house by any means, but quite large enough to hold a good

many little people. Now I am longing to turn it into a House Beautiful for small pilgrims who are too feeble to continue their journey without a rest."

"And Joy's George shall be the porter," said Mr. Douglas, "when I have found him."

"When do you set out on that quest?" she asked.

"When I have seen Joy again, and taken possession of George's photograph," he answered. "It is fortunate that she has one."

"There is Godiva to be thought of too," Colinette remarked after a pause. "I have had a pathetic little letter from her to-day. She has been making mistakes, as I feared she would. It seems that Rex turned up unexpectedly at Garden Lodge, and proposed to her."

"Then it is Rex who has been making

mistakes," Amyot Douglas exclaimed. "She naturally thought that he asked her out of pique. Why couldn't he have waited till every one had got tired of Miss Espinasse's engagement? People are talking of nothing else just now. What a silly fellow he is!"

"These young people muddle their love affairs in the wildest way," said Colinette. "I am afraid Godiva must leave Richmond, and I hoped she would stay there for months. Miss Charlotte is far too fond of her nephew to endure his rejection without a word. I fancy there is a little coolness now between the aunts and Godiva."

"Still Rex must blame himself for everything. He held Godiva far too lightly. But I am sorry for this parting; they seemed made for each other," Amyot Douglas said thoughtfully. "I

wish I could foresee a future reconciliation. One of these days I will look up Rex, and see what can be done."

Godiva, when she had written to Lady Colinette, had vaguely wondered whether any help or comfort could come from her faithful friend. She was anxious to fly from Richmond now, and yet she hardly knew how to effect her escape. The harmony was broken ; Miss Charlotte could not forget that Rex had hurried out of the house, saying bitterly that he did not know when he should see them again. They might have all been so comfortable, she said to Henrietta, if only Godiva had been a trifle less severe.

Henrietta, who was now getting over her indisposition, perfectly agreed with Charlotte. She felt that it would have been possible for Godiva to have softened

the blow. Henrietta shrank from anything in the shape of blows, and never inflicted one if she could help it. She would not have opposed a little courting if it had been carried on quietly without visible demonstrations; still she did not particularly desire any love-making in the family. It had always seemed to her that love-making brought restlessness and confusion, if not strife. Poor Louisa's affair had been a prolonged disturbance from beginning to end.

"But I hope you will not reproach Godiva," she said to Charlotte. "Of course we shall always be very fond of the dear girl. We must not permit ourselves to make the slightest difference."

The sisters honestly believed that they did not make any difference; but who does not know what it is to be the recipient of studied kindness, forced

smiles, words resolutely bland ? Godiva writhed under it all, and went to bed in her pretty room full of grief and resentment.

“ It will be better to go back to Silver-sea, where I’m w-w-wanted,” she sobbed half aloud to herself, “ than to stay here where I am not.”

She lay awake half the night and woke late in the morning to feel the warm breath of summer on her tired face. Joy had opened the window, letting in the sweetness of the old garden and a waft of wind-scattered rose petals. She dressed in haste, was too late for prayers, and sat down to breakfast with the miserable consciousness of being politely tolerated. Her apologies were received with a gentle formality which cut her to the heart.

Somehow she was compelled to admit

to herself that she was playing a sorry part in life. Alone in the garden, away from those two dear old faces which were now turned coldly on her, she shed a few bitter tears.

The shadowy trees, the shining river, the ivy heaped upon the old brick wall,—nothing had changed since the days when Rex had first met her here, and told her about that vicarage garden which had been the paradise of his boyhood. Alas! like most of our Edens, it was lost to him now. And must the gates of this pleasant bower be closed also? Godiva felt that so long as she remained here he would turn his back upon the place.

How long she sat musing she could not have told; she was perfectly still till the sound of footsteps roused her. Had she not been listening for them for hours,

waiting for some messenger who should come and tell her where to go and what to do? And yet now when they came nearer her heart gave a leap.

“They told me that I should find you here,” said Amyot Douglas quietly. “Lady Colinette is indoors talking to the Miss Kemples about a plan of hers.”

Her eyes looked into his without shrinking, but they were wet with tears that had not fallen.

“Colinette always has a plan; as fast as one is accomplished she makes another,” she said. “She is something like my father; he was never without a project, I think. It is a good thing.”

“It is a very good thing,” he answered. “Morris Durleigh’s projects were always for others. He was a happy man because he never brooded long over any personal grief or loss. To him life was not a

valley of tears, strewn with disappointment and woes, but a path leading straight to the continuing city."

His voice seemed to penetrate into the deeps of her heart without disturbing them. It was this gift of stealing unobtrusively into the remote recesses of the inner life which gave Amyot Douglas his power in the world. A silent power it was ; scarcely recognized by many whom it helped and lifted, denied by some, envied by none, because it never laid claim to any good that was effected by its influence.

He had seated himself on the bench by her side, and his presence gave her a sense of peace and comfort. He had spoken of her father, and at this moment she recalled Morris Durleigh's profound belief in human agencies. Amyot Douglas had been playing the part of

ministering spirit from his youth upward. He was not like Morris, a great and well-known philanthropist with a passionate fervour which overturned mountains. He was simple, honest, somewhat old-fashioned, perhaps, in his beliefs and in his ways of working, yet a deep thinker, always intent on studying the lives around him.

“We expect too much from this present life,” he went on, taking up his thoughts after a pause. “We rely too much on ourselves, and demand too much from each other. Our friends disappoint us, but our hearts disappoint us still more. Without, we see shallow streams ; within, we find a broken cistern which can hold no water. It is not until we accept the fact of this inevitable sorrow that we become resigned. And when patience has had her perfect

work we can hear the answer to the psalmist's question, 'Who will show us any good?'"

"What is the answer?"

She spoke so low that an inattentive ear could scarcely have caught the words.

"God has a thousand answers to this one poor question, and they are not answers only, but promises which lift us far above our feeble desires. 'Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into eternal life.'"

She was silent, but her eyes spoke.

"As we grow older," he continued, "we find that we must expect less and less from humanity. The voices within us echo the voices that speak from without. The jingle of our nursery rhymes has

scarcely died away when we hear the dismal tune of 'all is vanity.' Only let us learn that human hearts can never meet the infinity of our needs, and we shall learn to live happily. We shall not love less, but we shall not sacrifice our all to earthly loves."

There was a brief silence. Then Mr. Douglas rose and spoke in a different tone.

"I am an inveterate sermonizer," he said, smiling, "and I have half forgotten Lady Colinette's message. She sent me to ask if you can return to town with us this evening? This new plan of hers will give her a great many letters to write, and your help is needed very much."

"Yes, I can come," she answered, as they turned towards the house. "Miss Henrietta is getting well, and I can be spared."

The sisters were all the better for Colinette's sunny influence. Godiva found them entering into her plans with all their hearts; even Henrietta was roused to enthusiasm.

"I feel as if Morris Durleigh's spirit was with us," she said. "And it seems as if everything would be made easy. The landlord of that empty house is one of our pleasantest neighbours. Charlotte will go with you and talk to him about terms."

"And you will forgive me if I take Godiva away, Miss Kemple?" Colinette spoke in a pleading voice. "I don't know how all my letters will get written without her aid. And I want her to write to some of her father's old friends and tell them of our scheme."

"Oh yes, we will let her go," said Miss Henrietta, her face suddenly soften-

ing as she looked at the girl. "She has been very kind in helping to nurse me."

Godiva felt lighter of heart when Henrietta smiled at her. But Charlotte said nothing; she was still too full of passionate pity for her boy to pardon Godiva.

Joy went upstairs later on to pack the trunk and give her help to the departing guest. Her fresh face had grown paler and thinner since Emily had made that dying confession.

"Dear Joy," Godiva said, "you ought to be happier now. You know that George deserved all the love you gave him."

"But that makes me sadder," Joy replied. "It makes me hate myself for having doubted him. I shall never be at rest till I have asked him to forgive me. I knew all through that George had his faults, but I ought to have known

that he was honest. As to faults, what does love care about them?" added the girl, speaking half to herself.

Godiva saw her tears falling on the gown that she was folding. And again she fell to wondering how it would have been if Rex had not been sent away in haste. Well, he was gone, and perhaps he would find another woman to be his wife; a kind, soft woman like Joy, who would take just what he had to give her and be thankful.

"The joys that God takes from us He often restores," she thought. "But the gift that our own hands fling away, does that ever come back? And I didn't know—and I don't know now—if it ought to have been kept or let go. Somehow my heart was not ready to take it in, and so I had to shut it out."

She was so pale and quiet when Coli-

nette brought her back to Park Lane that Mrs. Errington was full of concern.

“Is this poor child going to die?” she whispered to her god-daughter.

“Godiva ‘dies daily,’” Colinette answered, with a sad smile. “Girls of her type are born to suffer. Does not some writer say that the world we see reflects itself upon the face? Well, Godiva always sees a sorrowful world, and does not know how to seize the chance of happiness when it comes.”

“Poor child!” Mrs. Errington repeated.

“Life makes upon her deep impressions,” Colinette continued. “Every experience is deeply stamped on her heart and preserved there. One must be gentle with her, and watch over her as well as one can.”

That night the two friends sat talking

together before they slept; and Colinette listened to the story that Godiva had to tell. The girl leaned upon the elder woman with a somewhat shy but perfect confidence which touched her. And Godiva's recent perplexities had deepened the relation of guardianship which had insensibly grown up between them. Still, even Colinette, with all her wisdom, could do little for her now.

"You ask me what I think?" she said. "I think, my child, that if you had accepted him it would not have been well for either of you. He was rash, far too rash, and rushed in like a fool where angels fear to tread. For the end, well, we must wait, little one. We are so blind, you know, that we often mistake a beginning for an ending."

CHAPTER VII.

THE UNEXPECTED.

“It is only the unexpected that ever happens,” said Colinette.

She spoke the words lightly enough, applying them to some trifling circumstance, but they sounded solemnly in Godiva’s ears as she took her way to Aunt Susanna in Holles Street.

They were preparing to leave the house in Park Lane for the summer, and all the rooms were beginning to show signs of coming desertion. People were hurrying off into the country; carriages and cabs laden with luggage rattled past Godiva as

she walked along the West-end streets. She had a feeling that something in her own life had come to an end as well as the London season ; and yet there was that underlying consciousness of uncertainty. As her friend had said, an end often looks like a beginning, and a beginning like an end.

Aunt Susanna lived a life of busy quietness in Holles Street. She had never possessed the pen of a ready writer, and although she wrote regularly, Godiva did not gain much information from her letters. Susanna had always been a reserved woman, making few friends, saying little about the things belonging to her own life. She loved her niece dearly ; but she had felt that life in a lodging-house was not quite the right life for the girl to live. She had missed Godiva every day and every hour ; and

yet she was glad that she had gone to Hugh Durleigh's house—glad in spite of all the painful experiences there.

Wherever Susanna reigned there was sure to be smartness and prettiness. The oilcloth shone like polished oak; on the hall-table was a jar holding poppies mingled with the feathery foliage of asparagus; and in the hall stood Susanna herself, grave and trim in her black gown, extending her hands to her niece.

“I have been longing for a glimpse of you, child,” she said.

“And I have been longing to come to you, aunty; but I could not get here sooner,” Godiva explained, as she followed her aunt into a tiny sitting-room at the back of the house.

There was a good deal of talk on both sides. Once when Susanna chanced to speak of Rex she saw a bright flush rise

to her niece's face, and noticed that she answered coldly. Instantly Miss Hayward changed the subject, not abruptly, but with a quiet tact which many a worldly-wise woman might have envied. She had done her best for Godiva for years, and had tried in her simple fashion to prepare her for life. But there is a separate burden which each soul must bear alone, and the nearest friend can only stand by and watch the bearer with loving eyes. Often it is best not to watch at all, but to pray silently for the dear burden-bearer that the strength fail not.

“So Miss Kemple is better?” said Susanna. “And Mr. Kemple has quite recovered? Well, I am glad of that; it is a tedious business to call in a doctor. And that reminds me that there is a young girl upstairs, who came, a week

ago, to consult a great specialist in Harley Street. She does not seem to get much hope from him."

"What is the matter with her?" Godiva asked.

"She has lost her voice," Miss Hayward answered. "A cold attacked her throat, and did some serious mischief more than common. It is a sad thing for her, for she is being trained for a public singer."

"And what is her name, aunty?"

Godiva's heart began to throb faster as she asked this question; she did not expect anything, and yet to hear of a young girl who could sing was to be sharply reminded of Janet.

"She has a foreign name and an English face," Miss Hayward replied. "She calls herself Mademoiselle Mosca. How pale you look, child!"

“Aunty,” said Godiva, rising with a resolute light in her grey eyes, “I must see this girl at once. You will think me crazy, I dare say ; but when one is searching for anything that is lost one must not leave a stone unturned.”

Miss Hayward was puzzled for a moment. Then she understood.

“I hardly think it possible that Mademoiselle Mosca can give you any information,” she replied. “Besides, she is absorbed in her own misfortune, and can talk of nothing else. She cries a great deal, poor girl. It seems that it was expected she would be a success.”

“Then she does not take her trouble patiently, aunty ?” Godiva was moving towards the door as she spoke ; her gaze rested eagerly on Susanna’s face.

“Patiently ? No, indeed ; there is very little patience in her nature, and that

makes me pity her all the more. She had been living in an ambitious dream, and then this blow fell."

"Aunty, I must go to her directly. Can't you find me an excuse? Give me something to carry up to her room."

"Will a bottle of medicine do?" inquired Susanna, with some amusement. "She sent a prescription to the chemist an hour or two ago."

Godiva seized the bottle, neatly swathed in white paper, and ran upstairs with the light tread which Susanna remembered so well. The drawing-room door was open; the housemaid was busily removing all traces of some lodgers who had just departed; and Godiva went flying on up to the second floor. Here the door was closed, and although she paused for a few seconds outside, waiting to recover breath, she could hear no sound within.

At last, with a somewhat unsteady hand, she knocked.

“Come in,” said a hoarse voice.

Mademoiselle Mosca was lying at full length on a sofa, with her back to the light. On entering, Godiva’s eyes scanned the outlines of a tall figure in a fashionably made gown. Abundant coils of light hair, carelessly twisted, crowned the head; and the pose was so familiar that it was a hard matter for the unexpected visitor to control herself.

“I have brought up something from the chemist, mademoiselle,” she said with forced quietness.

There was a rapid movement, and the young woman was standing bolt upright in an instant.

“Godiva,” she cried, flushing deeply, “how did you find me out? Who told you that I was here?”

“No one told me. Don’t be angry, Janet dear. I came to see Aunt Susanna, and found—you!”

“Aunt Susanna!” Janet repeated, as if a fact was slowly forcing its way into her confused brain. “Surely you don’t mean the person who lets these rooms? Yes, you do. I had forgotten that you said your aunt was a housekeeper. And she has recognized me from your description, I suppose? Well, I could not expect anything else after leaving my hiding-place.” She stared vacantly at her cousin for a second or two, and then sat down suddenly with a heavy sigh. “It is so strange,” she murmured, pushing the hair away from her forehead with a weary gesture—“so strange that you should have come *now*.”

“I have come at the right time, I am sure of that,” said Godiva, with increas-

ing calmness. "A few minutes ago, when Aunt Susanna told me that the young lady upstairs had lost her voice, I knew that I should be wanted."

"You have been wanted very much in our family." Janet spoke with a bitter little laugh. "You had to nurse Sybil till the strength came back into her limbs, and now you will try to nurse me till——"

"Till you get your voice again," said Godiva in a cheery tone of hope.

"That will never be." And Janet burst into tears.

It was some time before the passionate sobs were stilled. Miss Hayward came softly upstairs, and heard the sound of weeping. She divined then that Mademoiselle Mosca was the lost Janet Durleigh, and entered the room to render motherly services, and help Godiva in the task of soothing her cousin's dis-

tress. And the task was not an easy one ; poor Janet had not had a friend at hand to whom she could pour out her feelings, and they were all the more violent for being pent up. She was quite exhausted when the storm had spent itself, and lay helplessly on the sofa, looking at Godiva with weary eyes, in which there was an expression of entreaty not to be mistaken.

A telegram was despatched to Silversea before the evening set in. Janet was told of what had been done, but she seemed to be resigned to her fate, and did not upbraid Godiva for communicating with her friends.

“After all,” she said languidly, “I must have written to papa myself, if you had not come. Dr. Morrell does not take a hopeful view of my case ; he spoke in quite a desponding tone to-day. And my

funds are getting low," she added, with a vivid flush. "I cannot overwhelm you all with my success, as I thought I should. But oh, Godiva, I can never bear the misery of going back to Silversea. You don't know how I hate the place, and Albert Villa, and everything!"

Godiva felt that she *did* know.

"We won't think about your going back yet," she answered. "I feel certain that Uncle Hugh will come and manage everything satisfactorily. Have you never realized the sorrow and anxiety that he has endured? You must be prepared to see a great change in him, Janet; this trouble has done the work of years."

"But I wrote and told him that I was safe and well. I have written several times," exclaimed Janet, eager to defend herself. "And you don't consider how unkindly I was treated!"

“Your father never was unkind, Janet.”

“Yes, he was—in a way. He permitted Honor to rule us all. She could not have had Aunt Weedon to live with us if he had not given his consent. Honor would bear anything for money; she is sordid and cold, and she has no artistic tastes. I don’t want to see her again.”

“Indeed, Janet, she has been very unhappy about you.”

“Nonsense, Godiva; you give people credit for feelings which do not belong to them. It must have shocked you to find that we girls were so heartless and so——”

“But you are not heartless girls,” Godiva interrupted eagerly. “Sybil is full of warm affection.”

“You have wrought a great change in Sybil,” said Janet gravely. “Sometimes I have thought that if we had had just one loving soul amongst us when we were

children, we should have grown up gentler and kinder. But there never was any love. Mamma was always thinking about pushing up into a good position, and looking down upon people who were poor. When she died we did not grieve very much, we didn't really! There was nothing to be truly sorry for, you see. Have I made you cry, Godiva?"

"Not much." Godiva dried her eyes. "I was only thinking how good God has been to me. He gave me love and sorrow and sacred memories. Where there has been no love, there can be nothing sweet to remember."

"Nothing sweet," Janet repeated. "There never has been anything sweet in my life excepting the music. And when Aunt Weedon put a stop to that, I felt I could not live in the house any longer. Do you blame me?"

“I don’t think the music ought to have been stopped, dear. It was a great wrong.”

“I am glad that you admit I was wronged,” Janet went on in a satisfied tone. “If Honor were here she would declare I had nothing to complain of. Well, it seemed as if the stars in their courses were fighting for me to escape. Several things happened altogether. First, I met Signor Bianco, who came down from London because he had heard of my voice.”

“How had he heard of it?” Godiva asked.

“Oh, that is easily explained. Have you ever noticed the large music shop in Church Road? That is Daker’s shop, and Daker is the man who engages singers to come to the Silversea concerts. He knows a good deal about Signor Bianco; and one day he said that

Bianco would be glad to secure my services. I will confess now that I went often into Daker's parlour behind the shop and sang to him and his associates. It would have made Honor wild if she had known it. But what could you expect? I was born with the gift of song, and I had no sympathy at home."

"I always loved to hear you, Janet," said Godiva honestly. "I knew that yours was no ordinary voice."

"But you don't understand music!" Janet stamped her foot impatiently. "I wanted to be heard by critical ears. I dare say you know nothing about Bianco? He is the manager of a great English opera company, and is always searching for voices in all parts of the world. I was to have been the soprano in the new opera that he is getting ready, *Gillian*. I was to have been *Gillian*—think of

that! The scene is laid in the days of Queen Bess, and the costumes will be so pretty! And now it is all over," added the girl, sinking into her seat again.

There was something so pathetic in her bitter disappointment, that Godiva refrained from saying what she felt. What she did feel was intense thankfulness. If Janet's plan had indeed been carried out, Hugh Durleigh would have broken his heart.

"Signor Bianco behaved shamefully, Janet," she said after a pause. "How did he dare to conceal you from your friends?"

"He did not conceal me; I concealed myself." The girl's quick temper blazed up. "Why do you blame people who don't deserve it? I am over twenty-one, you know, and I'm my own mistress. All that Bianco did was to send me to

the best master he knew. I required some finishing lessons, and I studied with Mazzolini. He is a kind man, and I took up my quarters with his wife in their cottage near the river. You need not look astonished; I can make myself agreeable when I please, and the sentimental Italian and his portly wife were quite fond of me."

"We tried our hardest to find you," said Godiva.

"Very silly of you not to succeed." Janet tossed her head disdainfully. "I guessed that papa would employ detectives, but I wasn't in the least afraid. It is only in sensational novels that detectives are good for anything. Why, I behaved in the most open way, and avoided all appearance of mystery! And as I kept papa duly informed of my safety there really was no need for a hue and cry."

Godiva could not help sighing. If Janet had only shown a little regret for the anxiety she had caused it would have been a hopeful sign for the future ; but she seemed so haughty and hard, that her cousin almost dreaded Hugh Durleigh's coming. It was only too probable that she would meet him in a spirit of defiance.

A fit of coughing was the result of Janet's talk ; and Godiva, as she brought her some soothing drink, surveyed her face more closely, and detected changes. The girl was visibly thinner ; her eyes were larger and brighter ; her healthy colour was gone. It struck Godiva that Janet had never looked so attractive before ; what she had lost in bloom she had gained in refinement, but the freshness of girlhood had fled.

“ All was going well before I ventured

on the river one evening," she continued hoarsely. "There was a thick, unwholesome mist that seemed to wrap me up and get into my throat. Next morning my voice was gone. And now you know my whole story. Signor Mazzolini had heard a good account of these rooms, and I came here to be under the care of Dr. Morrell. I suppose there is very little hope. What do you think, Godiva? Have you ever known such a case?"

"No, Janet, I have had little experience in such matters," Godiva admitted frankly. "But there must be hope. Doctors differ, don't they? When Uncle Hugh comes he will want you to consult somebody else?"

"I dread his coming." Janet began to cry again. "Oh, I can't—I won't—go back to Silversea."

CHAPTER VIII.

GOING AWAY.

It seemed to Godiva as if all the world were coming to Holles Street in the next two or three days. Colinette was the first to appear, and she was full of hope and cheerfulness.

“Dr. Morrell is a gloomy man,” she declared. “I believe that Janet will sing as well as ever one of these days. We will find another doctor.”

“But I shall never be Gillian,” whimpered Janet. “Bianco has had to give me up. Of course he can’t wait till my voice comes back.”

“After a few months of Gillian you would have been wanting to give *him* up,” said Lady Colinette, in her most decided tone. “You have just escaped a period of musical slavery. This is a merciful cold; instead of destroying your voice it will be the means of preserving it. It has got you out of Signor Bianco’s clutches as nothing else could have done.”

When Hugh Durleigh arrived he fully agreed with Colinette that this was a “merciful” cold. But he saw, too, that it was something more than an ordinary cold; Janet was weak and feverish, and could not bear the strain of a long conversation. He contented himself with briefly explaining that Signor Bianco’s prospects were by no means so flourishing as that gentleman had represented them to be. His opera company was not a well-established concern, but merely a

speculation, entered into with insufficient capital, and not at all likely to stand against the attractions which long-trying and experienced managers could offer. Janet had rashly listened to bad advice ; that was all that her father had to say to her.

When he found the girl so crushed, his heart was melted within him. Janet had been his favourite child always ; but ever since Miss Weedon had come to live at Albert Villa there had been a barrier between her father and herself. Honor was mistress of the house, and it was Honor who had sacrificed everything to Aunt Weedon's tyrannical whims.

He could not be blind to that money-worship which his eldest daughter had inherited from her mother. Of all the Durleighs Honor had been the least influenced by Godiva's gentle power ;

although she had fallen, to a certain extent, under her cousin's spell, her innermost heart was unchanged. Never coarsely uncivil as the others had been, she had not caught such a clear glimpse of a higher life as they had done. But then, being a prosaic woman, she had felt far more contented with her lot, and had found it impossible to realize the savage sense of dissatisfaction which had made Janet's and Sybil's tempers so intolerable at times.

When Aunt Weedon had declared that music would be the death of her, Honor had taken fright at once. Better anything rather than the loss of Miss Weedon's fortune. Better Janet's repressed energies and stifled need of expression than the lack of those thousands which would flow into the Durleigh coffers one of these days. And so it

came to pass that there was war in the household; and Janet, wild and embittered, had fled from them all.

“If Janet cannot sing, she will die.”

It was Sybil—the new and sympathetic Sybil—who had said those words; and they were ringing in the father’s ears as he travelled up to town as fast as the express could take him. Later on, when Janet had gone to her room, he repeated them to Godiva.

“I think she will sing again,” the girl answered quietly. “But you must not take her back to Silversea, Uncle Hugh; she has a perfect horror of the place. If she returned I should not be surprised at anything.”

“She shall not return.” Hugh Durlough kept down a rising sigh. “Their tongues are busy about her down there; you know what the place is.”

“If you could let her go abroad,” said Godiva half hesitatingly, “I think it would be best. Lady Colinette has suggested another doctor. It is very likely that a change of climate will do wonders. Do let her travel, Uncle Hugh.”

“Let her go again, just as I have found her!” he said sadly. “Well, one must give up anything for her sake. But a man loves to keep his children round him. Something in our home life went wrong, Godiva; there has been a lack of union because there was in the beginning a want of love. You must have love with you at the outset if you would run well.”

Godiva knew what he meant. He had not married for love's sake, but for money's sake. He had taken a woman with means and with expectations, but without a heart.

“Your father was a happy man, my dear,” he went on. “He never desired any great things for himself; the joys that he craved were as simple and common as daisies. He could always enjoy himself in the old home, when I could not. He was never on the watch for a nod from the great folks of the neighbourhood; but I used to be miserable if I wasn’t noticed. He would rather have had a kiss from a little child than a gracious word from a princess. A child’s smile, he would say, is God’s smile.” They were sitting by the opened window. As he spoke he looked out into the slowly darkening street. “I think the hot weather begins to tell upon me,” he said, passing his hand across his forehead. “No, it is not the weather; it is the strain of life. We kill ourselves by inches rather than live

simply. You see, Godiva, I began with a low aim. It was your father who aimed high."

She understood him, and looked at him tenderly, her grey eyes shining in the dusk.

"He knew that there is no harvest like love's harvest. He could be happy even while he watered the precious seed with tears. He did not care a straw when people called him an enthusiast and a fool. They said he sacrificed his life to a hopeless cause. Did he? I am reminded of the words, 'Whoso loseth his life for My sake shall find it.' If I had lived as he did I should not feel so old and tired to-night."

"There is such a thing as growing young again," said Godiva, laying her hand on his. "Uncle Hugh, you have not yet come to the close of your journey."

Sometimes the traveller finds thorns at the beginning of the path, and heart's-ease growing at the end."

"My thorns were of my own planting," he answered, pressing the little hand kindly.

"Well, a good many of our thorns always are. But the flowers—I think the angels sow them for us very often. They spring up in such unexpected places," said Godiva brightly. "And you don't know what is growing for you in your children's lives. By the way, Sybil tells me in her letters that Mr. Westgate comes to see her."

"Yes; he calls every week," Hugh Durleigh returned, with a sudden touch of gladness. "You know she has moved downstairs into my old study, and they have their long talks in that little room. Honor was not very well pleased with the

friendship at first, and Miss Weedon objected to it strongly. But they chanced to find out that his uncle was a baronet, and that set the matter in a new light."

Godiva's lips curled. Then the scorn died swiftly out of her face, and she laughed merrily.

"I am glad his uncle is a baronet, if it pleases them," she said. "It is good to hear of anything that makes Sybil's path smooth."

Janet, restless and feverish, was eager to catch at any new hope. She was really grateful when her father suggested that she should go abroad. The matter was settled all the more rapidly on account of her eagerness.

"And Godiva will come too, won't she?" she asked, as if there could be no doubt about her cousin's inclinations.

“She looks worn and tired, doesn’t she, papa? I am sure she would like to get away from cloudy old England.”

Hugh Durleigh looked at his niece, and saw a flash of feeling pass across her face. Could it be that Janet was right, and that Godiva too would be glad to get away? Were there certain mists and clouds that she longed to leave behind and escape from? He could not tell; he only knew that her eyes expressed no reluctance when Janet made her proposal.

“Would you really like to travel with Janet?” he said earnestly.

She answered slowly and gravely, “Yes, uncle, I am ready to go.”

And then a great darkness seemed to fall upon her and envelop her for a moment. She was about to realize an old dream; but what a difference there

would be between the dream and the realization! Rex had talked to her sometimes about the far-off places she had longed to see; and she had half believed that they would look on those scenes together. Now she knew that she should drift out of the old years and old haunts, and leave him behind.

The world was broadening round about her; old friendship and early love seemed to be fading slowly into the distance. "Lover and friend" would be put far from her; but she would see the glory of morn and sunset on wide seas, the intense blue of Italian skies, the shadows of ilex and cypress; and surely the sting of past pain would never find her more.

But she knew better than to believe in swift forgetfulness; thought and memory lie too deep to be flung into

the sea, or buried under the bloom of a flowery land. Godiva felt that she should remember.

“I am glad you are going,” Lady Colinette said tenderly, when they talked the matter over together. “But I shall miss you, Godiva, and think of you every day. I wonder when we shall have another chat by a bedroom fire? Not next winter?”

“No,” Godiva answered thoughtfully. “Next winter we are to spend in Rome.”

“You will come back a new woman,” said Colinette, regarding her with keen eyes. “Travel won’t change your heart,—it is such a true heart that one would not have it changed,—but you will get a wider view of life; and you will be softer.”

“Softer?” Godiva’s lips quivered. “Ah, Colinette, you think me hard!”

“No, not hard. I only mean that when you see the faults of the many, you will be ready to forgive the weaknesses of the few whom you know well. We must see far-away things if we would learn the true value of near things.”

“But when one has overvalued the near things——” Godiva did not finish her sentence.

“From overvalue one often jumps down to undervalue, and so misses the right estimate altogether,” said Colinette.

Godiva was silent. Anyhow, whether she had been hard on Rex or not, he could be but little to her ever again.

“I don’t think there is any need to despair about Janet’s voice,” Colinette remarked after a pause. “It will come back, I believe, Godiva ; and she will be a singer, but not an actress.”

“Oh, not an actress,” said Godiva gravely. “Uncle Hugh could not bear that. He is full of prejudices.”

“He will not have to bear it. Janet could never be any one but herself. An actress must fling herself away altogether,—dropping self with the everyday clothes that she leaves in the dressing-room. If she has the true gift it will be a delight to escape from the ‘me’ of her common life. But Janet has never felt this desire of escape; and she never will feel it.”

“Yes, she has felt ‘the devotion to something afar,’” Godiva replied.

“Yes, but she can float up to that ‘something afar’ on the wings of her own voice. What I meant was that she did not desire to cast off her personality. But, Godiva, I am sure that life has good things in store for Janet and Sybil;

they will take their right places and be happy women yet."

"I have always hoped so." Godiva's eyes filled with tears. "It was their discontent that made them unkind when first I lived with them. It is hard to be pleasant to others when one's own heart is full of dissatisfaction and unrest."

"That is not your case, my child," said Lady Colinette softly. "But you must try to keep in the sunshine. Don't be always choosing the shady spots and lingering in them. Don't be always pausing in the path, and looking back to that place which was wet with your tears. Go right on, keep straight, and look up, and hope."

This was the last talk that these two had together for some time. A week later the girls had set out on their travels, with an old French governess for a guide.

CHAPTER IX.

CHARLIE'S FRIEND.

THE stillness of the summer night had settled down upon an old country town lying among green hills. The night air was fragrant with the sweet, wild perfume that came blowing softly from the heights. Stars were shining faintly in a dark sky, and occasionally there was the pale gleam of harmless lightning. In the town the inhabitants had gone early to rest, as primitive people do; only here and there a light glimmered from some upper window. The taverns were closed; there was not even a single

loiterer in the silent High Street ; the quietude of darkness and sleep had fallen on the place.

In one of those wide fields that lay between the town and the hills there was a great circle of caravans, and an immense tent. Here the stillness was broken sometimes by unwonted sounds ; once or twice there were strange grunts and whines, and even a stifled roar that seemed curiously out of harmony with the peaceful English country around.

A dim oil-lamp was burning in one caravan, and the door stood open, letting the sweet night air wander in. There was just light enough to show the thin, white face of a little sick boy, who was lying on a narrow pallet, and looking up, with wistful blue eyes, at a dark young man, bending over him.

“You must lie down and get some sleep, George. You’ll never get through to-morrow’s work if you don’t,” said the boy with grave earnestness. “Don’t mind me; I’m no worse to-night.”

“And not much better, Charlie,” the young man answered sadly. “I wish I knew how to bring your strength back. You don’t pick up quickly.”

He spoke with a pleasant voice, and with an accent more refined than might have been expected from one of his class. The hand that stroked the boy’s golden curls was slender, and gentle as a woman’s; and the touch seemed to recall the memory of other fingers, for the lad sighed and closed his eyes.

“Mother used to stroke me like that,” he murmured feebly. “I wonder where she is now?”

“Up above the stars, perhaps,” sug-

gested George. "Safe at rest, anyhow : you may be sure of that."

"Yes, I am sure," Charlie said thoughtfully. "Only I want to hear more about the home for good people. It's so comforting to think about it when I'm lying here all alone."

"You shouldn't be left alone if I could help it." George touched the pale forehead tenderly. "But if you're to have nice things to eat, and make you strong, I must work hard, Charlie."

The blue eyes opened quickly with a look of pain.

"If it wasn't such dreadful work, George, I could be happy," said the little lad in a faltering voice. "Oh, George, give it up ! Do something else. If you were killed, I should pray to die ! Give it up, George dear. Don't go into the cage to-morrow !"

"A man must keep his word, Charlie, if he *is* a man, and not a cur. What would Doone think of me if I was to play him false just at the last moment? He would have had some one down from London if I hadn't arranged with him. Wright's misfortune was a very awkward thing, you know."

"But wasn't it Wright's own fault?" Charlie asked. "Phyllis told me all about it when she came to see how I was getting on. She said that Cato jibbed at his jumps, and Wright went into the cage after they had put the meat out in the barrows at night. You know it's a rule that the beasts should always be let alone at feeding-time. But Wright had been drinking;—he did drink dreadfully, poor fellow."

"Yes, he did drink," George responded

in a musing tone. "And the liquor got into his head, and made him reckless. But Phyllis oughtn't to have come here telling you awful things, Charlie. She's a feather-brain of a girl, if ever there was one."

"I wanted to know," said Charlie eagerly. "I heard the roaring and yelling, you see; and I was too ill to get up and look out. The door was shut; and no one thought of me till you came back with the medicine that I'd got to take. I'm glad you didn't see it, George; it must have been a fearful sight. Instead of jumping through the hoop, Cato sprang right at Dolferino and had him down in an instant. He screamed horribly when Cato bit him through the arm. Oh, George, do you think he'll ever use that arm again?"

"Now, hush, old boy; you're getting

excited. I want you to go to sleep—just to oblige me, eh?”

George rearranged the scanty pillow as he spoke, and put his arm round the lad. Charlie rested his head on his friend's shoulder with a deep sigh.

“Poor Dolferino!” he murmured. “He's lying in the hospital at Portsmouth, and you're safe here with me. But to-morrow, George——”

“Why should to-morrow be worse than to-day, Charlie? I've been into the cage with the four lions, and they did all their tricks to admiration.”

“But you didn't go into Cato's cage?” said Charlie, raising himself. “Those four are nothing to Cato. Phyllis told me——”

“Not one word more of Phyllis's tales to-night. If I don't put my foot down you'll have a return of the fever. Shut

your eyes, that's a dear lad ; and I'll lie down and get a wink or two myself."

"Yes," replied Charlie meekly. "And I'll look at the stars till they send me to sleep."

George waited until the blue eyes closed ; then he shut the door partly, making no noise, and stretched himself on another mattress. A few minutes more, and the sound of regular breathing told that one of the occupants of the caravan was in a deep slumber.

When George had offered his services to the manager of the travelling circus, they had been accepted readily enough. He was engaged at first at very low wages ; but being, as he admitted, as hard up as it was possible for man to be, he made the best of a poor bargain, and worked with a will. When he arrived it chanced that the manager was in need

of a helper to do stable work; and George soon proved that he had a thorough knowledge of horses, and a genuine pleasure in attending to them.

Very soon he showed his skill as a rider, and began to practise equestrian feats. There was a certain Signor Ricardo who had long been one of the leading performers at the circus, and had lately begun to show symptoms of declining powers. He was a bad man, vicious and brutal, who had made his wife's lifetime a prolonged sorrow. She died while she was still a young woman, leaving him with one child, a delicate blue-eyed boy.

If ever there was a little lad whose beauty was sure to win the favour of the public, it was Charlie. His angel face and golden curls never failed to call forth a burst of applause. Ricardo knew the value of his childish loveliness, and

traded upon it without a spark of pity or remorse.

The boy's lithe little frame was tortured into all sorts of unnatural postures; if he dared to cry he was beaten cruelly; if he refused to do his tricks he was starved as well as beaten. The beautiful child, with wings fastened to his shoulders, went round the ring on a horse's back every day and every night, performing feats which made unthinking spectators clap their hands in rapture. Sometimes he stood on his father's broad shoulders, and took flight into the air to be caught again; sometimes he was turned upside down, or inside out, according as Ricardo's fancy willed. There was little time for play, little leisure for rest.

And so this sickening life went on, till the little victim broke down under its

strain, and Boone, the manager, interfered to save the child from his father's cruelty. But the members of the troupe were almost afraid to show any kindness to Charlie. Ricardo was so violent and so quarrelsome that few dared to risk incurring his wrath by ministering to the sick boy.

George, however, was not afraid of anything—not even of the coarse giant who flung about heavy weights as if they had been feathers. When Ricardo roughly ordered him to mind his own business, and not to meddle with other people's children, George answered that children were everybody's business—a reply which deserved to be printed in letters of gold, and posted on the walls of every town.

In all kinds of ways, direct and indirect, did the new-comer endeavour to

benefit little Charlie ; but Ricardo, maddened by drink, and the consciousness of failing powers, had resolved to leave the circus. He meant to join another company and take his helpless victim with him.

The plan was never carried out. Charlie, patient and resigned, had given himself up for lost, when a mighty champion appeared to take his side, and fell his enemy with a single blow. This champion was Death, and the blow was struck right at an organ which some had declared that Ricardo did not possess. The doctor said that he had died of disease of the heart.

No one mourned for the departed athlete ; little Charlie, lying in a half-delirious state, did not at first comprehend his deliverance. Ricardo, being one of the chief performers, had lived

in the caravan with his boy; and George was allowed to step into his place. But these two friends did not have the house on wheels entirely to themselves. It was divided into two compartments, and the fore part of the van was occupied by the celebrated lion-tamer, Dolferino.

Thomas Wright, for that was his name in private life, had been bred up to his work from boyhood, and no one had ever supposed that any harm could come to him in following his hazardous profession; not half so hazardous, said some, as dancing on the tight rope. He was used to dealing with lions, and they seemed to resign themselves to his sway without more growls than could have been reasonably expected. Being a handsome fellow, plucky and strong, he was a great favourite with the public, and his performances were liked even better than

those equestrian feats for which Boone's troupe had always been justly celebrated. In a word, Dolferino and his lions were the chief attractions of the circus.

Unlike his next-door neighbour, Ricardo, he was good-natured and easy-tempered, and always kept on good terms with every member of the troupe. Not until the love of drink got the mastery over him did he lose the command of himself, and his power over the lions began to wane. Some subtle instinct seemed to inform the beasts that their dreaded master was waxing feeble, and yet he became more exacting as they grew less submissive.

George, working hard to rise in his newly chosen profession, took a deep interest in the lion-tamer's doings, and spent most of his spare minutes in watching the animals and learning to under-

stand their ways. The more that he saw of the lions the more they fascinated him. And at last, in defiance of the laws of the establishment, he ventured to enter one of the cages with Dolferino.

His transgression, unknown and unwitnessed, did not reach the manager's ears till later on. He went in when Dolferino, after the exhibition had closed for the night, was teaching the animals a new trick. The cage which he entered contained only two, a lion and lioness, old friends of the tamer, and Dolferino endeavoured by voice and action to assure them of the perfect trustworthiness of the stranger. So favourably did George's first interview with the august couple pass off, that he felt as if he could be at ease with them after a short acquaintance.

There were nine lions in all, and one,

the largest and most splendid of the collection, resided in a cage alone. He was an African lion of prodigious size, and the manager was constantly heard to lament his comparative uselessness. No amount of threatening or coaxing could have induced Cato to ascend the triumphal car, and couch at Britannia's feet. That proud position was filled by Pompey, a beast of inferior size, but accommodating disposition. As to Britannia herself, no power on earth could have prevailed over her unconquerable dread of Cato, even if that majestic animal had condescended to pose in the desired manner. His terrible reputation was sufficient to keep every member of the troupe at a distance, and none, save Dolferino the invincible, had ever essayed the task of bringing him into subjection.

If poor Wright had been as sober as

he was courageous, even the fierce Cato might eventually have yielded to his spell. Every one liked him, and every one regretted the growing deterioration which was visible to all eyes. After Ricardo's sudden death, he showed many a kindness to the destitute boy, and lived on the most friendly terms with George, encouraging him in his intentions to take care of the lad.

“If I was the man I used to be, why, I'd adopt Charlie myself,” he said one day. “I've nobody belonging to me now. When I was younger, George, I was thrown over by a young woman. 'Tain't often that a fellow thinks much about such a thing as that, young women being anything but scarce. But she somehow took hold of me.”

Dolferino said these words sitting on the steps of the caravan, early on a

summer morning. George, having ministered, as well as he could, to poor Charlie's wants, was eating his breakfast in the open air. The lion-tamer cared little about breakfast, and the fresh light, shining on his once handsome face, showed all the ravages that a wild life had made. The younger man, seated below him on the grass, glanced up with a swift look, full of strong sympathy.

"There's always one gal that stands out, clearer than any of 'em, in a man's mind," Dolferino went on, after a brief pause. "Anyhow, that's my experience."

"And mine too," said George in a low voice.

"Ah!" The lion-tamer drew a long breath. "And what's become of her, if one may ask?"

"That's just what I don't know. If

I did know, I shouldn't be here now. She was in service—nursemaid in a family at Notting Hill. When I went there to ask for her, they told me that she'd left her place all of a sudden, after some words with the missus. And that was all I ever heard."

It was the first time that George had ever spoken of his great sorrow. As he spoke, the blood rushed up suddenly to the roots of his black hair, leaving him very pale.

"Did you have any words with her?" Dolferino inquired.

"Never. I saw her last on a bitter afternoon in winter, and she was just her own self. There was something on my mind then which I wish I'd told her. But I thought it would have been a shame to worry her with a bother that she couldn't help. I was pretty low, but

I hoped, you see, to pick myself up before I saw her again."

Sounds of stirring and bustling betokened that the time for moving on had come. The tamer went back to his lofty seat on the box of the triumphal car; and George, after another look at Charlie, betook himself to his humbler place in front of the caravan.

On the evening of the same day Dolferino was lying in a hospital, with his right arm crushed to splinters by the jaws of Cato.

CHAPTER X.

WHAT GEORGE DID FOR CHARLIE.

ALL through the remaining hours of the summer night certain words of Charlie's were haunting George.

"I want to hear more about the home for good people," the boy had said. "It's so comforting to think about it when I am lying here all alone."

Now it happened that George had early associations with an old country church and a kind clergyman, and was less inclined to sneer at parsons than most of his comrades. When Charlie had spoken of his longings, he had

thought of Mr. Elmslie and the days of his own boyhood. He remembered the faithful friends who had watched over Joy in her girlish years. All kinds of recollections came back to him as he lay awake in the caravan—memories of school feasts, talks in the cricket-field, walks in the shady lanes with the genial man who knew just how to deal with lads, and understood their ways.

If only such a friend as Mr. Elmslie could be found for Charlie !

Poor George had never filled up that great void in his heart which was always aching for Joy ; but he had felt the need of something to love. If you did not love some one you were sure to go to the bad ; this was what George had learnt from watching the lives around him.

He had never been a lazy fellow ; but

it had always been difficult for him to stick to one thing. He had tried his hand at a good many trades, and just as he had mastered one, another would present itself to his mind as a far superior business. He was constantly catching sight of open doors and bolting into them. It was this habit of dropping one occupation and taking up another which had so bewildered Joy. He was really clever, and so sanguine that one could hardly help following him in those quick flights which led to nothing.

Left alone in the world, and having failed many times when he had believed himself to be sure of success, George was humbler than he had been of old. He wanted something to love—something to cling to and work for—and little Charlie was found just at the right moment.

It seemed the most natural thing in the world that George should become Charlie's guardian and protector. Boone was quite willing to give George the place which Ricardo had left vacant—had not Ricardo's powers begun to fail, while George was in his full vigour? But even with better pay it was not easy to supply the sick boy with all that was necessary for him in his enfeebled condition. That little flame of life had sunk very low; if it was ever to burn brightly and steadily again Charlie must be sent away to some healthy spot, where he could have dainty food, and perfect rest and peace.

And then came that sudden disaster which cut short the career of Dolferino.

When this misfortune happened, Boone had set his heart on exhibiting at a fashionable watering-place, where

rich people were plentiful, and a circus was sure to be an attraction. But he had felt that something novel and splendid must be introduced into the performances if there was to be a great success.

To bring the magnificent Cato into use was the chief ambition of the manager. He had made such tempting offers to the beast-tamer, that it was not surprising if Dolferino grew venturesome. But Cato had proved himself to be more than a match for the man who had resolved to conquer him, and Boone was compelled to fall back on the eight lions who were willing to submit to George's control.

But now that they had halted on the outskirts of a quiet country town, Boone and George were laying their heads together. Only it was not deemed wise

to admit little Charlie into the secrets of their conference.

As George had been so readily accepted by the performing lions as their lord and master, it was agreed between the two men that he should attempt the task of taming Cato.

If George succeeded in this terrible undertaking he would get not only an increase of salary, but a sum large enough to send Charlie to a comfortable lodging, and provide him with everything necessary for an invalid. By putting himself into danger, he could secure two or three months of repose and refreshment for the little lad whom he had taken into his desolate heart.

But was the danger very great after all? To do Boone justice, he did not believe that it was.

“Not half as great as it would be if

you were a stranger," the manager declared confidently. "Cato's accustomed to the sight of you and the sound of your voice. And he don't seem to take offence when you go near him. It's my opinion that you've got a natural gift for dealing with beasts. Any one can see that. As to Dolferino, he was in too great a hurry to succeed. And then lately he'd been getting precious fool-hardy."

"That's true," admitted George.

"The finest lion in England," continued Boone, walking towards the cage wherein Cato lay at ease, slumbrous and calm, with his great golden eyes half open. "There's a mighty head and shoulders for you! And he's as well fed as any creature in the kingdom. Nobody can say that we don't keep our animals in good condition."

This was true also. The travelling circus was a large concern, well managed, and, as a rule, well supported. There were elephants, camels, and zebras, as well as the lions.

“Poor fellow! good old Cato!” said George.

As he spoke he quietly thrust his arm between the bars of the cage, and burying his fingers in the lion’s tawny mane, gently rubbed that kingly head. Cato did not resent the liberty; he shut his eyes and inclined his massive front forward, as if he rather liked it.

Boone witnessed this familiarity with unbounded satisfaction. And so it was agreed that George should enter the cage on the following evening, and put the animal through his jumps. At night, when the show was over and the spectators gone, the place would be quiet

enough, and there would be no fear that Cato's attention might be distracted from his lesson.

"But if anything should happen to me," thought the young man, as he lay awake in his corner of the caravan, "I wonder what would become of Charlie? Boone must make me a promise to look after him. But I'd like to leave him in better hands than Boone's, although Boone isn't half a bad fellow. If there was any gentleman like Mr. Elmslie here!" A sweet, solemn sound came thrilling through the stillness of the night. It was the old church clock striking one.

"Perhaps the parsonage is near the church—just as it used to be at home," George thought. "I'll get up early to-morrow, and go and see the parson, and ask him to come to Charlie. No ;

I shan't have time to go myself; there are so many things to look to. But I'll send little Alice; she's a quick child."

Alice was the clown's daughter, a bright girl of ten, who always ran on errands willingly enough. George gave one more look at Charlie, satisfying himself that the boy was sleeping peacefully; and then his own eyes closed, and he seemed to float away into a tranquil dreamland. Once more he was leaning across the garden gate, talking to Joy when the day's work was done, and the sun was going down behind the low hills. How little changed she was! The blue eyes looked frankly into his, the rough golden hair was blowing about her forehead—he was telling her that he had fancied she was lost, and laughing at the foolish blunder. Lost! How absurd it was to think of such a thing, when she

had been standing here at the gate, and watching to see him come along the well-known road !

These are the dreams which always come to those who have loved, and are parted from each other. It is the waking-life that seems unreal, and the dream-life that is true. In sleep the heart seeks its old love ; there is no longer any need to feign forgetfulness ; the mask that has been worn all day is flung aside in the quietness of the night.

When George awoke it was bright morning. He had slept later than usual, and somehow the sunny clouds of dream-land seemed to be still lingering about his brain. But he bestirred himself, and gave Charlie the small quantity of breakfast that the poor lad could eat. And then he called little Alice, who came running towards him cheerfully, with a

bunch of feathery field-grass in her hand.

"Alice," he said, "do you know where the parson lives? You've been out in the fields already, I see."

"Oh, it's lovely here!" the child answered, waving her grass triumphantly. "If Charlie could get out of doors and run about he would be well in a minute. I wish we weren't going to move on. We always stay longest in the nasty places, don't we? Oh, you want to know where the parson lives? It's in a beautiful house, all covered with ivy, close to the church. He's a tall, kind man—he nodded to me this morning."

"Then you have made his acquaintance? Bravo, Alice, you're miles ahead of us all. Now, are you woman enough to go off to him straight, and ask if he'll come to see Charlie?"

The child opened her eyes very wide, and was mute for a moment.

“Yes, I’ll go,” she said suddenly. “He nodded, and he had a kind face.”

“It speaks well for a man, let him be what he may, if children like his face,” thought George.

The old red-brick house, overgrown with ivy and creepers, was waking up to the business of the day. A very tranquil kind of business was done in these parts, for the country town seemed to sleep away the greater portion of its existence. And the vicarage, divided from the town by the pleasant fields, was out of sound of the few noises that were made there. Two old ladies, taking breakfast in a comfortable morning-room, were congratulating each other upon the haven of rest which they had found. A third lady, much younger, presided over

the coffee with a contented face ; and a tall man in a clerical coat was dividing his attention between his letters and his cup.

“ Such a good thing that Colinette met Mr. Hardwicke,” said granny, with a sigh of satisfaction. “ But one can hardly fancy a widower with two daughters living here. The house is large enough to hold an immense family, isn’t it ? ”

Granny did not know that the vicar’s family had consisted, once upon a time, of seven children. The stones in the churchyard told the story of the births and deaths which had taken place in the vicarage. Mr. Hardwicke’s head had whitened under many a sorrow since the day when he had brought his wife to the old red-brick house ; and now he had gone abroad with his two remaining children to seek new strength for the

delicate girls, who were all that was left to him. And granny, with Mrs. Errington and Lady Colinette, were established here for August and September.

The room was full of the scent of clematis, which muffled up the windows, so that the light crept slowly in through masses of bloom. Colinette, in one of her favourite grey gowns, wore a delicate little lace kerchief knotted at her throat, and fastened with a bunch of heliotrope. She was serenely happy that morning, listening to the bird-concert in the garden, and looking through the nearest window at a bit of grey wall heaped with glistening ivy.

Quite suddenly a little head came between her eyes and the wall. A child, pale and dark-haired, stood looking timidly in upon the group at the breakfast table.

“There is a small person who wants something,” she said, rising from her chair, and going towards the window.

Then Amyot Douglas looked up from his letters, and recognized the little girl who had played in the field an hour before.

“Perhaps,” he suggested, “she wants to speak to me.”

“What is it?” Colinette asked her kindly. “Have you come to find the vicar?”

“Please,” Alice answered, pointing a little finger at Mr. Douglas, “I’d like to speak to *him*. There’s a sick boy at the circus—his name’s Charlie—and maybe he’ll come and see Charlie.”

“I am sure he will,” said Colinette, with a smile.

A little later, as she stood watching him going across the sunlit common

with the child by his side, she thought again how pleasant life was that day. No shadow of an approaching danger darkened her spirit for a moment. She watched the thistledown floating in the warm air when the two figures were out of sight, and saw the little white flowers of the wild camomile starring the waste land. Farther off there was the great tent, just visible from her window.

CHAPTER XI.

OUT OF THE MOUTH OF THE LION.

AMYOT DOUGLAS found Charlie alone in the caravan. George, carried off by Boone, was hard at work, and unable to be present at the interview. But his presence was not needed to make the lad feel at ease with his new friend.

Mr. Douglas talked quietly to Charlie, saying all the things that the boy had wanted to hear, answering all his questions, soothing all the little doubts and fears that he had not told even to George. It was easy to see that Charlie's sensitive nature had suffered

terribly under the long 'strain of his father's cruel treatment. There was something too bright and too eager in the large blue eyes—something almost painful in the intense desire for perfect repose.

“If I could only sleep one whole night through I should be better,” the boy said. “I pretend to sleep sometimes to please George; but I always wake up after a little while.”

“I must have a talk with George. Can I see him if I come to-night?” asked Mr. Douglas, after a moment's thought.

“Yes, sir; but don't come till the performance is over. If you would say a few words to me, soft-like, just the last thing, I think I could sleep.”

“I shall come,” said Amyot Douglas quietly. “And, Charlie, you must not

worry yourself about all the hard times that are gone past. The past is over and done with, you know. As for the future, we will try to make it bright for you. Good-bye, my boy, till to-night."

When he returned to the red-brick house Colinette met him in the garden. Her old vivid gaiety (which always charmed people in society) was missing ; but her smile was very sweet. She seemed somehow to have drawn the languid sweetness of the day into her very existence. The garden was steeped in calm sunshine; peaches and nectarines were ripening on the walls; now and again an apple or a plum dropped into the grass.

As they paced up and down one of the paths he told her Charlie's story.

"Oh," she cried, the light flashing from her hazel eyes, "I know all about

children ! It is because I know them so well, and am always in touch with them, that I feel wild when they are badly treated. When I think of the helpless look that comes into their poor little faces sometimes—when I think how intensely they want to explain themselves, and can't—I long to devote my whole life to their service. I want to find words for them, and make their wants known. What are all we stupid grown-up people about that we don't do more for the little ones ? ”

Mr. Douglas was watching her. They had come to a standstill at a little gate which opened into an orchard behind the house. Long afterwards they both remembered the scene that lay before them—the lush grass, the mossy fruit trees interlacing twisted boughs, the warm lights slipping down between the

branches. Beyond the hedge that protected the orchard rose a sloping harvest field, rich with golden grain, and above all was the cloudless blue of the summer sky.

“We will get Charlie sent to our House Beautiful,” he said. “Let us go through the orchard and into the corn-field. This is such a perfect day that I want to get as much out of it as I can, and enjoy it as slowly as possible. It is not wise to hurry through one’s delights. I think it is because we snatch at things too quickly that their perfume does not linger with us longer.”

He had talked on in this fashion that she might regain her repose ; and after a few moments her usual calmness came back. They passed through the gate, under the shadows of the trees, and up into the field, where the corn was

falling under the sickles of the reapers. Machines were busy elsewhere, but just in this spot the men were at work in the old fashion. And the scene, suggesting the usual thoughts of plenty and peace, had its quieting influence over Colinette.

The warm morning melted into a golden afternoon, dreamy and slumbrous; it was a time when it was impossible to sit in the house, where the old ladies dozed sweetly in shaded rooms, and Amyot Douglas and Colinette repaired again to the orchard. There they sat and talked or read while the shadows lengthened slowly, and the gold spread farther and farther across the peaceful land.

And then came evening, and evening deepened at last into night.

In the great tent the horses had gone galloping round the ring; the girls had

leaped through their hoops and tossed about their garlands, standing on their broad saddles, and the successor of Dolferino, the beast-tamer, had been seen in the cage with eight lions, making them jump at the crack of his whip, and finally couching down among them with a calm aspect of perfect ease and safety.

People had shuddered at the sight, and enjoyed themselves with that hateful kind of pleasure which gloats over the danger of a fellow-creature. If they had heard their feelings plainly described they would have indignantly disowned them at once. But there are many ugly propensities which are unrecognized until they are clothed in words; and this habit of encouraging men to risk their lives is one of them. George had risked his life boldly enough, and had been

rewarded with the usual enthusiastic applause.

The shouts had died away, the lamps were turned out, and the hard day's work was over at last. Charlie, in the caravan, was waiting impatiently for the kind parson to come, and wondering why George had not looked in? The clown and his little daughter had stopped to ask how the boy was, and to say good-night.

The sky was studded with stars. Colinette stood under the porch as Amyot Douglas went out, and the dew-wet tendrils of the creepers touched her uplifted face. There never was a sweeter night, she thought; the air was laden with delicate flower-scents, and up above were the solemn planets, shining with their mystic light.

“How happy I have been to-day!”

she whispered to herself in the stillness. "The stranger hath not intermeddled with my joy. I suppose every one has some quiet nook in the heart which is never opened to the world. We all shut up something—it may be a blessing or a bane ; it does not matter which. Every soul has some possession that it cannot share with its neighbours."

She stood listening till the sound of her friend's footsteps was deadened on the grass. Then she raised her hands, plunging them into the cool, feathery foliage that grew all over the porch, and gathering spray after spray of jessamine. Strolling back into the drawing-room, she found it already deserted. The country air and languid weather had overcome the two old ladies, and sent them early upstairs.

A lamp was lighted and placed on a

table in the middle of the room. She put a shade over the globe to soften the yellow glare, and then sat down in an arm-chair, leaning her head upon its back, and looking out absently through the open window.

She sat there, in the scented stillness, with the jessamine sprays in her bodice, and her hands folded idly in her lap. All her past seemed like a dream; it was as if a soft haze had fallen suddenly over the path she had trodden, and she looked back to see only a cloud. Nothing was real but the voice and face of Amyot Douglas and the silent sweetness of the star-sown night. Never before had life seemed so inexpressibly calm and restful as now. Old wounds were healed; wild heart-throbs were stilled; it was, perhaps, a foretaste of the everlasting rest.

When Mr. Douglas found his way to

the caravan again, Charlie was sitting up on his mattress with a very eager face.

“I knew you’d come, sir,” he began ; “and George will be here presently. He came a minute ago, and told me he’d got to look after something particular, but he’d come back soon. He kissed me, George did, and he left a message for you.”

“I will hear the message presently, Charlie ; but first I want you to look at this,” said Mr. Douglas, taking an envelope out of his pocket. “I’m afraid you won’t see it well in this dim light,” he added, looking up at the shelf on which the lamp was placed. “Do you keep matches anywhere ? ”

“Oh yes, sir. There’s a box on the little ledge above the window—just over my head.”

Mr. Douglas found the matches, struck

one, and let its light fall directly on the photograph of a young man's face. He held the picture and the blazing match close to Charlie.

"Why, this must be George's brother!" the boy exclaimed. "It can't be George himself; but it's just like him, only he's thinner. Oh, sir, another match, please."

Mr. Douglas caught sight of a piece of candle in a tin candlestick. He lighted the candle, and let the lad take a longer look.

"It's George," Charlie said, after a moment's careful study. "But he looks older and sadder-like than this picture. Did you know him, sir, before he came here?"

"I know some one who is a great friend of his," replied Mr. Douglas, putting down the candle. "And she lent this portrait to me. She has lost

sight of George, and cannot rest till she finds him."

"I always thought he'd lost somebody," said Charlie in a musing tone. "He's a grave chap, George is."

"And now for the message, Charlie."

"He told me, sir, to ask you to remember me if anything happened to him. I don't know why I'd got to say that," said Charlie, turning his eyes anxiously towards the door. "He was all right, George was. He'd been in among the lions, just as Dolferino did, and they were all as mild as milk. He said he'd be here presently—— Oh, sir, what in the world is that?"

A savage roar—a tremendous, protracted sound, rang through the little apartment, and seemed to freeze the blood in the lad's veins. His pale face grew chalky white; he stared at Mr.

Douglas with wild eyes, and threw his arms up with a despairing gesture.

“It’s Cato!” he gasped.

Scarcely had the words left his lips when they were followed by the shriek of a human being in intense agony. Charlie sprang up from his couch in a perfect frenzy of terror; and Amyot Douglas, pushing open the partly closed door of the caravan, was down the steps in an instant.

Three or four men connected with the circus had collected near the bars of Cato’s cage, and strove with yells and sticks to divert the enraged lion from the unfortunate beast-tamer. What Amyot Douglas saw was a sight to strike horror into the boldest heart. A slight but strongly-knit young man was engaged in a life-and-death struggle with the infuriated animal in the cage. His left

arm hung useless by his side, the coat and shirt sleeve that had covered it were torn to tatters, and blood was pouring profusely from a ghastly wound in the shoulder. Still, with indomitable pluck the man defended himself with the whip which he grasped in his right hand, and, still keeping his keen dark eyes fixed steadily on his assailant, he moved nearer and nearer to the cage-door.

Enraged as he was, the lion was still controlled, to some extent, by the spell of the dauntless eyes. As to the men outside, not one of them had ever been into the den of a wild beast in his life. They had laid hands on every available piece of wood or iron that could be found, and made desperate lunges at the lion through the bars. But it was clear that if the poor beast-tamer succeeded in escaping from the cage alive, he would

owe his safety entirely to his own courage and skill.

He was still creeping nearer, and yet a little nearer to the door, when they all saw a change pass over his face. It was a change that looked like death. Every trace of colour faded from the lips, and the fire in the dark eyes suddenly went out. In one instant, swift as a lightning flash, the lion was upon him, and he was down, stricken mute and senseless, while the great beast stood over him with glaring eyes, as if defying them all to interfere between him and his helpless prey. And in a moment—in the twinkling of an eye—Mr. Douglas had seized a crow-bar from some one who stood near him.

“I’m going to face the lion,” he said. “While I keep him off, some of you must drag the man out.”

The cage-door was unbolted, and he

leaped in. And then began a brief scene which not one of the spectators was ever likely to forget till his dying day.

There was a pause of one second; then, with a short, savage snarl, the lion sprang right at the new-comer, but lightly and quickly Amyot Douglas stepped aside, and dealt the creature a tremendous blow with the crowbar, driving him back into a corner of the den.

Now was the opportunity of the others. Fired by this example, one strong fellow laid hold of George's prostrate body, and dragged it out of the den by main force before the lion had recovered from the effect of that stunning blow. That he would recover and return to the attack in a moment, everybody knew.

And he did. With a terrific roar of baffled rage the mighty beast made a

second spring. Had Amyot Douglas tarried an instant longer his doom would have been sealed, but Boone himself, startled by the fearful roars of the lions all joined in one appalling chorus, had rushed hastily to the spot. As he pulled Mr. Douglas backwards another man leaped up and closed the cage door, and Cato's bound only brought him into contact with that iron-sheathed wall through which there was no way of escape.

"I'll get rid of that brute before I'm many days older," said the circus manager, wiping the moisture from his pale face.

The lion, as if he had heard the words, was thrusting his great fore-paws through the bars in front of the cage, and making such frantic attempts to break loose from his prison, that those who were nearest fled in terror. Boone glanced at the

creature for a moment with a stifled oath, and then, not untenderly, raised George in his arms, another took up the poor fellow's feet, and together they carried him into the manager's own caravan.

"Some one must tell Charlie," thought Mr. Douglas, while one of the men hastily ran for a doctor.

He had found George at last; he had kept faith with Joy, but as yet he could not tell if it was a dead or a living George who had been lifted out of that awful den. He did not know the extent of the wounds which the cruel teeth and claws had made, he scarcely knew how to answer poor Charlie's inevitable question.

The question came exactly as he had expected it would. That terrible drama which had just been enacted had not

taken many minutes. Yet it seemed hours ago since he had sat by the little lad's side and shown him the portrait.

Charlie was lying straight on his mattress in a silent agony of suspense. His poor little delicate face seemed smaller than ever, and it was hard to meet the gaze of those eager waiting eyes.

"Has Cato killed him, sir?" the boy asked.

"I hope not; I think not, Charlie." Mr. Douglas stooped and took the child's thin hands. "He has been hurt, and they have sent for the doctor. We shall soon know how he is."

"I tried to get up and see," Charlie said; "but I was too weak."

Mr. Douglas sat down by the bed. His face was as calm as if it had been carved in marble, yet a thousand thoughts and

feelings contended for the mastery in his heart. In a moment the little scene in the starlight came back to him—the mass of foliage hanging over the porch, the slender fingers pinning a spray of jessamine into his coat, the low voice repeating softly the refrain of an old ballad, “Douglas, Douglas, tender and true.” He had been true, he had done his best; and no good knight of old times could ever have felt more weary after a battle than he was feeling now. There was rest in the very thought of the flower-scented room, and some one listening for the sound of his returning footsteps. Ah, how different everything might have been! The little spray of white blossoms, crushed and withered, was still in its place. Like the frail tokens worn on the casque in olden days, it had been preserved in the thick of the fight.

About a quarter of an hour passed. Cato's deafening roar no longer broke the stillness of the night. To quiet him they had let him have his long-deferred supper. Boone would have had him remain fasting as a punishment, but some of the men remarked that when the lions were punished the whole establishment suffered. So Cato was fed, and was appeased and satisfied.

A cheerful voice was heard outside the door of Charlie's apartment, and then the rosy country doctor came bustling in, followed by Boone, who waited on the steps. Dr. Ward began with good news at once.

"I believe the man will do very well," he said. "He's been badly bitten, but there's no reason why he shouldn't get right if he's properly looked after. Why, Mr. Douglas, what a hero you are, to be

sure! But you're feeling used up, aren't you?"

"A little shaken, of course," Amyot answered. His eyes were weary, and there were purple shadows under them.

"Now you must go home at once and get some rest. I'll walk with you across the common."

Mr. Douglas rose slowly. "The boy," he said; "he has been dreadfully excited and distressed, and ought not to be left alone."

"I'll see to him, sir; I'll stay with him myself," said Boone, stepping forward eagerly. "You've made us all ashamed of ourselves, sir, by doing what you've done to-night. As to Charlie, he shan't want for anything."

It was enough. The boy looked up with a happy light in his blue eyes when Amyot wished him good night.

The doctor and Mr. Douglas walked home together across the dewy field and over the fragrant common. The stars were clearer than ever; one bright planet hung like a lamp above the gable of the old house; the trees rose in great black masses against the sky. All the windows of the vicarage were dark save one; as they drew nearer Amyot saw a shadowy figure defined in the subdued lamp-light. The doctor parted with him at the gate.

“Above all things get some rest,” was his last charge.

A quick ear had caught the caution, two slender hands laid hold of Mr. Douglas as he came into the porch, and he was drawn swiftly and gently within the house. There was a strong spirit in Lady Colinet, and in a supreme emergency it made itself felt at once. Her hands trembled a little, but her hazel eyes met

his bravely, and her low voice was quite firm.

“You have been in danger,” she said.
“I know it, but you shall tell me nothing to-night.”

CHAPTER XII.

“ MY LOVE, HE STOOD AT MY RIGHT HAND.”

EARLY on an October morning, when the sun was shining and gossamer drifted about in the still air, Joy came downstairs with her usual light step. She could hear cook moving about in the kitchen; no matter how early Joy might be, cook was always earlier still. The garden was rich with golden tints and mellow tones of orange and red; Miss Henrietta's dahlias were all in the splendour of their fluted velvet; Miss Charlotte's asters made a goodly show. The back door was open, and Joy lingered on the threshold

for a moment, looking away into softly coloured vistas with a sense of quiet happiness.

The lost was found. George was coming to Richmond that very day.

Boone and his circus had gone away from the country town, leaving the wounded beast-tamer behind. Little Charlie, too, had been left in a cottage hospital to be comfortably nursed. As to George, it astonished every one to see the progress that he made after a certain long talk with Amyot Douglas.

The doctor thought it would be a long time before the wound in the shoulder was perfectly healed. Cato's great teeth had bitten to the bone, and his claws had sunk deep into the arm. But, although both shoulder and arm continued to be very painful, George's health was mending rapidly, and he recovered quickly

from the terrible strain on his nerves. Lady Colinette wrote letters to Joy until he was strong enough to write with his own hand.

And now the long waiting time was over, and George was coming to his old sweetheart again.

She had no fear of disappointment in this meeting. To those who have loved and never suffered a re-union sometimes is a disappointment. But when two loving hearts come together after a sore chastening they are too full of gratitude to fancy that anything is wanting, and "fancy" is the origin of a good many of the quarrels of sweethearts.

Joy, humble and intensely grateful, longed to talk everything over with George; longed to atone for those strange doubts which had tortured her soul in the bitter days gone past.

It was fortunate that when Joy's heart

was full of a delicious tumult of expectation, there was some one near to attend to all the common duties of life. Still more fortunate was it that this helper demanded no thanks, but quietly took up everything that slipped out of the hands of the happy dreamer. Cook—the grave, silent woman who had sealed up a terrible story in her own bosom—was never hard on the young ones who had not yet had their day. It was not every day, thank God, which was quenched in such utter blackness as hers had been. Joy was going to have a beautiful fate.

Even Miss Henrietta, who did not love the disturbance created by a love-affair, was glad that her handmaiden was to be re-united to George. If it had been a new lover who was coming to take Joy away, Miss Henrietta would have looked on with gentle indignation.

"But as she was engaged before she came to us," she said to her sister, "I cannot, of course, object to an old attachment. The young man seems to be of a roving nature; but Lady Colinette is quite sure that he wants to be settled. We can but hope that his wandering propensities will not break out again after marriage."

"Oh no; he will be too happy to wander," cried Charlotte.

"My poor Charlotte, how sanguine you are!" Henrietta sank back in her chair with the gentlest of sighs, and closed her dove-like eyes as a sign that she had exhausted the subject.

Miss Charlotte went out of the room to hide her radiant face. She really was almost ashamed of the rapturous interest which lovers always excited in her. This vivacious old maid had such a large stock

of romance and emotion on hand that she could make up any deficiency in the couples she came across. If there was not enough sentiment in a courtship, she supplied it out of her inexhaustible store. If other lookers-on were cold, she beamed for all, shedding forth a radiance which no chilling worldly breath could dim.

But in the love of Joy and George there was no vacuum to be filled up. They had each contributed full measure, and the mysterious separation had made an exciting story out of an everyday true love. For true love is an everyday thing, let the doubters and cynics say what they will. Not in Society, perhaps; and certainly not in the great middle class, which is not a bit more unworldly than the set which it envies and reviles. But the lads and lasses of the people still keep a good deal of real old-fashioned feeling in

their hearts. An immense amount of true courting is done on Sunday afternoons, as those who have eyes may see. There are fields on the borders of our great towns where Jack and Jill still plight their troth, much as their grandparents did before them. And there are shady walks about Kew where Harry and Harriet make their loving plans, and lay the airy foundations of a future home. "Some flowers of Eden we still inherit;" in spite of gin-palaces and betting-clubs there are quiet paths in life where the serpent has not left his trail.

Joy, having almost persuaded herself that she had been working hard all the morning, went up to her attic to put on her afternoon cap and gown with tremulous delight. It was a dark bronze gown, which the sisters had given her as a reward for her attention to their comforts;

the mob-cap sat daintily on the abundant golden hair, and was decked with a little bow of pale blue. She looked at herself in the glass with more interest and curiosity than she had ever felt before—trying to see herself as *he* would see her.

Poor Joy! she was half afraid that George might miss something in her appearance. It was not quite the buxom girl of old days whose charms were reflected in the little glass. Her features were sharpened; the outline of the cheek was not as full as it used to be; the eyes looked larger and deeper. But there are certain losses that bring a gain. The slightly worn look on this face had taken away the girlishness and intensified the womanliness. Joy was not sure that George would be well pleased with the alteration, and innocently tried to make

the best of herself. But she need not have feared.

It was about half-past three when she went downstairs, and found the kitchen empty, and the cat and the kettle singing a drowsy song.

There were few pleasanter spots, perhaps, than this clean, old-fashioned kitchen on an October afternoon. The door stood open, and the trees were dropping amber showers upon the threshold. Sometimes a quiet breath of wind would steal in, bringing the rich sweet scents of autumn. Vine leaves made a splendid draping for a bit of garden wall; a Virginia creeper flung its fire-coloured trailers across the ivy; a cluster of Michaelmas daisies lent their soft lavender to mellow the stronger tints. There was a bunch of dahlias in a quaint blue jug, standing on the broad window-sill.

Presently the back-door bell gave its little tinkle. Joy stepped out and unbolted the door with trembling fingers, and there was George, waiting under the yellow leaves.

The colour mounted into her face and died out again. Then a mist came before her eyes, but she kept back her tears. He was so thin and pale, and carried his left arm in a sling ;—she had not realized all that he had gone through and suffered until this moment.

“ Oh, George ! ” she said in a choked voice, and pulled him gently in.

The cat and the kettle droned on ; a great humble-bee came booming heavily into the kitchen ; but there was no ruder sound to disturb the sacred stillness of this meeting.

They sat down together after a little while. The first thrill of re-union was

over; and Joy had so much to tell of those bitter days in the Strand, and the hours of suspense and uncertainty which had succeeded them. She spoke rapidly, with a fluency which surprised him; in old times she had been slower of speech. Once she had always waited for him to begin; now she wanted to tell her own tale first, and was eager to get it done.

He watched her while she talked, and saw a hundred new charms where she had feared he would miss old ones. Surely he had never prized her duly until this day! He recalled the haggard, painted faces of the circus girls, and the value of her freshness and sweetness was trebled twenty times by the remembrance. Not only had she gained new attractions, but he had lost the old self-conceit and self-belief which had once half-blinded him. Now he saw her in-

deed as she really was, and thanked God for the blessing he had won.

At last cook came in, reluctantly breaking up the *tête-a-tête*, and said a few words of kindly greeting to George.

“Don’t disturb yourself,” she whispered to Joy. “I’ll carry the tray into the parlour to-day. They won’t object, I’m sure.”

So this quiet woman added her little drop to the cup that was already brimming over with sweetness. George looked at her with unspoken gratitude in his dark eyes. He enjoyed the home pleasantness more than words could tell. The fresh, neat kitchen, with all its clean plenishing; the sunshine stealing in through autumn leaves; the cat’s drowsy purr;—all this was like the beginning of a new life, or the realization of an old dream.

He had been tossed about so long, and his heart had ached so constantly with the sense of want, that this foretaste of a settled rest was almost more than he could bear.

They drank tea almost in silence; the cat woke up and claimed his share of milk, and then came unasked to rub himself against George, as if they had been familiar friends for years. His old influence over animals was recognized wherever he went; in spite of all that had come and gone, he always persisted in saying that even Cato would have yielded to him, with time and patience.

"But you'll never, never have anything to do with wild beasts any more, will you, George?" said Joy, who almost regarded pussy's demonstrations with disfavour.

"N — no — I suppose not," George

answered slowly. "However, it was Dolferino who spoilt Cato's temper. Now, don't you worry, little woman," he added, seeing the cloud on her face; "I won't take to lion-taming again—there! It's a risky business, I admit. But you won't take it amiss if I go and see Cato now and then? He's in the Zoological Gardens."

"Oh, George, I don't think I could bear it."

"Well, you shan't be teased," he said, with a pleasant light in his eyes. "But you don't wish to cut me off from animals altogether, do you, Joy? You see, I've always had a hankering after their company. The world would be a duller place than it is if a man couldn't be friendly with four-footed creatures. Not that they themselves can fancy everybody. Cats, for instance, have got their likings very strong, and they don't purr for all alike."

But Joy did not want to talk about cats; and indeed there was still a good deal to be said between her lover and herself.

Miss Charlotte could not deny herself the pleasure of secretly watching the young couple as they strolled together in the garden. Too humble to take the middle walk, Joy led her companion into a grassy side-path, which ran between the wall and rows of old-fashioned plants and shrubs. From her bedroom window Miss Charlotte could catch glimpses of the two figures betwixt boughs and leaves; and then her strong sympathy brought tears into those keen eyes of hers, and she rejoiced for them with a kind of happy pain.

"And our boy might have been just as glad as George is if Godiva had not been so hard," she thought.

Meanwhile Joy, unconscious of Miss Charlotte's gaze, had slipped her arm within her lover's, and was going back in thought to her early days.

"Oh, George, how sweet this is!" she said, with a long sigh of satisfaction. "Don't you remember how the sun used to set behind old Butser hills? And how I used to stand at our gate and watch for you to come up through the lane?"

"Remember it? They say a man's memory isn't half as good as a woman's; but I've never forgotten anything," he answered, looking down into her upturned face. "Why, many a time, Joy, when I've been riding round and round that circus-ring, I've seen your eyes looking at me as plain as I see them now."

There was a brief spell of happy silence. The kindly old trees, which had sheltered two or three generations of lovers, spread

out their branches and made a screen just at the right moment.

"George," she said, breaking the pause in a half-timid voice, "there's just one thing—only a little thing, dear—which I should like to know. You can call back that bitter, bitter winter day when I saw you last?"

"Ay, Joy, indeed I can." He sighed as he spoke, and his mouth and eyes grew suddenly grave.

"Well, you didn't seem a bit like your own dear self that day," she went on, flushing and paling. "When I talked you scarcely listened; when you looked at me your eyes hardly saw me at all. Something had come between us, George. Ah, tell me now, for Heaven's sake, what it was!"

She had not meant to be so earnest when she began; but, like most women, her feeling mastered her before she got

to the end of her little speech. All the pent-up doubts and fears of weary months came back upon her in a bitter flood. Pale, with wild blue eyes and clinging hands, she looked up at him ; and he understood, as if it had been revealed in a lightning flash, how deeply she had suffered.

“ Joy,” he said, solemnly answering that passionate appeal, “ you were right ; there was something between us. I had been tempted to do wrong ; I wanted to find a quick way to make money, but the quick way is seldom the honest way.”

She gave a little sob of pain, and was still.

“ There were thieves in that old lodging-house where I was living,” he continued. “ Not pickpockets, you know, but smart men employed in prosperous houses of business. One was a clerk in a big publican’s place at Notting Hill. He offered to get me a comfortable berth

in the concern if I'd just play into his hands, that was all. I'll own I was tempted, Joy, and I'm ashamed of myself when I confess it. I'd been unlucky for a long time, and that little home of ours looked very far away."

Her tears were flowing, but she put her hand into his.

"When I met you on that winter afternoon, the sight of your dear face upset me. I'd come to Notting Hill to meet the clerk, and look at the premises where he was employed. And you were so innocent, Joy, and so glad to see me!"

She dried her eyes, and he stooped and kissed her before he went on.

"While you were talking, dear, I was making up my mind that I'd cut my bad companions. It was no sooner thought than done. I wouldn't trust myself with my chum again; he'd got a clever

tongue, and a way of persuading me. So I just went straight back to the Strand, packed my bag, paid my landlord, and came right away."

"Where did you go, George?" Joy asked in a trembling voice.

"To Barnet," he answered. "I knew an honest sort of fellow there who had charge of some stables, and I helped him for a bit. I wrote to you, telling you not to send any more letters to the old diggings; and you know how my letter came back to me."

"Don't go on, George," said Joy, clinging to him. "I know all that followed only too well."

After this explanation they did not talk much more that day. They walked to the end of the old garden, and looked away to the river and the sunset.

It was not long before George got into

a good situation. Kindness and influence did a great deal for him, and when Christmas came he was head groom in an establishment not far from Garden Lodge.

Charlie, too, came to Richmond, and was sent to that House Beautiful which was Lady Colinette's delight. The boy was very happy among all his new friends, but they noticed that he could not be quite satisfied unless he saw George every day.

Early in the new year Miss Charlotte arrayed Joy in a neat wedding-gown, and watched her as she went off to church to be married. As she was to be the matron of House Beautiful the children had a little feast in honour of her bridal, and Charlie made a speech on the happy event. The bride and bridegroom took up their quarters in the pleasant rooms prepared for their use, and thus the long-talked-of home was found at last.

CHAPTER XIII.

“SHE IS COMING HOME.”

“I WONDER,” said Miss Charlotte, suddenly breaking a long silence,—“I wonder whether we shall ever see Godiva Durleigh again?”

Four years had gone by. The old-fashioned garden had freshened in the showers of spring mornings, and faded in the mist of summer twilights. The creepers had grown so thickly over the house that scarcely a foot of brick wall was to be seen. Cook still reigned supreme in the kitchen; a young girl who had taken Joy's place now dusted

the shepherd and shepherdess with reverent hands, and nothing was broken as yet. All the little china people smirked and posed as they had ever done ; all the delicate little cups and saucers were set out as usual, as if for the doll's tea-party which never came off ; the clock in its bower still struck the hours in a musical tone, which had a note of sadness.

Nothing was changed at Garden Lodge ; the sisters themselves seemed to have slipped out of the memory of Time the Destroyer. He let them and their old house and garden alone. They were a little more chilly, perhaps, in the mornings and evenings, and wore small shawls of knitted wool over their shoulders. When Miss Henrietta dozed, in the afternoon, with her soft fleecy wrap folded round her, she looked like a large white hen gone to roost.

When Charlotte let fall that involuntary remark about Godiva Durleigh, Henrietta was just waking up from her nap. It was a September day, warm and bright, but with a suspicion of east in the wind. Henrietta felt rather shivery, and wanted hot tea and sympathy. "There is no reason to doubt that we shall see her again," she said, with a glance at the clock. "My nerves are a little out of order, I think."

"But she has been away four years," sighed Charlotte.

"Nothing is worse for the nerves than depressing companionship," said Henrietta, with her air of mild reproach. "I was just feeling the need of something cheerful, and you take a mournful tone. Four years—what are four years to a young girl? I dare say we shall find Godiva vastly improved."

"She was always very sweet," Charlotte murmured.

"A good girl; I was truly fond of her. But of course that affair with Rex was most unfortunate. He never speaks of her, does he?"

"Never," Charlotte answered. "The other day he was talking to me quite openly about Lady Dunn's flirtations——" Miss Henrietta shut her eyes, drew her wrap closely round her, and shuddered visibly. "About Lady Dunn's flirtations," Charlotte repeated with obstinate firmness. "It is a very sad subject, sister, but we are old women. Even if half a dozen girls were present I should speak what I thought. I would say, 'See what comes of turning marriage into a mere bargain!' All the world knows that the rich Sir Anthony is miserably poor in home happiness."

"I hope that Rex does not visit the Dunns," said Henrietta, unclosing her eyes.

"No. Mark me, sister," said Charlotte, with a flash of sudden feeling, "that woman would have got our boy to her house if she could. But he has steadily declined her invitations. He used to see General Espinasse now and then; but the old man died a little while ago."

Out of doors the afternoon was on the wane; the wind's song had sunk into a lullaby, and a humble-bee droned over the rich heart of a Gloire de Dijon rose.

"I don't think Rex will ever marry," said Henrietta, leaning back in her chair, and looking dreamily through the open window. "He is quiet by nature, and he loves rest and silence and flowers as all we Kemples do. Last time he came he told me how much he enjoyed the old

garden and the perfect repose he always finds in this place. He has had his dreams, and they are done with. Young men are always at their best when their love-fancies are over."

"In other words, when the head has begun to correct the follies of the heart," Charlotte remarked.

"Perhaps that was what I meant," Henrietta admitted graciously. "That clock is slow; it must be the hour for tea. Ah, here comes Eliza with the tray at last!"

"And a letter for me!" exclaimed Charlotte, pouncing on her prize. "From Godiva. Oh, sister, she is coming home!"

"Coming home just when the swallows are saying good-bye to England," said Henrietta, carefully helping herself to sugar and cream.

“Astonishing news,” cried Charlotte, hurrying through her letter, and forgetting all about tea. “You remember that girl Janet, who ran away first, and lost her voice afterwards?”

“Of course.” Henrietta was enjoying a piece of cake. “It was for her sake that Godiva went abroad. She wanted a companion. And—let me think—after they had been travelling for nearly two years, old Miss Weedon died at Silversea, leaving all her money to Honor and Sybil.”

“Yes; and Sybil married Mr. Westgate,” said Charlotte, looking off her letter for a minute. “Then, you know, Mr. Durleigh gave up his profession, and went abroad with Honor, to join Janet and Godiva.”

“But what is your astonishing news?” Henrietta asked. “I want to know whether it concerns Janet or Godiva.”

"Janet. You will hardly believe me, but she is married too. She met somebody at Cannes, and her father quite approved of him. There are only two of the Durleigh girls left single—Honor and Godiva—and I shouldn't wonder if they married on their way home. There seems to be quite a mania for matrimony broken out in that family. 'Marrying and giving in marriage'—the last days must be at hand. Everybody marries, excepting you and me and Lady Colinette!"

"There was some romance in Lady Colinette's early life," said Henrietta in a musing tone. "I wonder what it could have been? Only one or two persons know. No, Charlotte, I don't think Godiva will marry; she will be a book-writing spinster."

"Nonsense," muttered Charlotte, absorbed in the letter again.

Miss Henrietta drew herself up stiffly. When her sister had finished, and was quite ready to discuss the epistle from beginning to end, she feigned an utter want of interest.

“Godiva has only written one book you know, sister,” said Charlotte, “and that was a story for children. She says she shall never get beyond stories for children, but she hopes to do well with them. She is very glad that her first novel was destroyed. She thinks it an act of true charity to upset an inkbottle over a girl’s first novel.”

Henrietta pretended to turn a deaf ear to her companion, and took up her knitting.

“And Janet has given up the idea of being a concert singer. How these young women resign their ambitious dreams!” Charlotte went on. “It seems that she had to choose between her career

and her lover ; and she chose the lover. It is to be hoped that she will never regret her decision. Few men are worthy of a sacrifice."

"Humph!" said Henrietta, suddenly forgetting the part she was playing. "Whether they are worthy or not, the sacrifices are sure to be made. The more that a woman gives up for a man, the more she likes him. Think of our poor Louisa; she devoted herself, body and soul, to the one human being who was capable of causing her the greatest amount of suffering!"

"Rex's father was selfish; all the Longworthys were remarkable for their selfishness," Charlotte replied, with a sigh. "But our dear Rex has not inherited the family vice. And now that Godiva is coming home, and has written such a sweet, sensible letter——"

“ Oh, that I may be delivered from the disturbance of love-making ! ” Henrietta raised her mittened hands with a devout gesture, and let them fall gently in her lap. “ We have been at peace ever since Joy married. And although I have fancied that Eliza has seemed a trifle pre-occupied lately, there has been nothing to break our repose. She handled my china pug rather recklessly this morning. I must watch her. Sweet, sweet calm ! ”

“ But it would do us good to see those two dear children happy,” Charlotte ventured to say.

“ Is there only one way of making people happy ? ” Henrietta asked. “ Ah, my dear, singleness is not always loneliness ! ”

Charlotte said no more ; but her thoughts were very busy when she was alone that night.

It was true that Henrietta enjoyed her single life, and had never desired any change; but Charlotte, with her eager nature and active brain, had found her tame existence unsatisfying. She had never been as fond of ease as her sister was; in fact, she rather liked to feel the sharp point of a thorn now and then. It did her good to come across a rugged bit of ground sometimes. She had always been conscious of certain powers of battling and struggling; but these forces had not been called into play.

"What would be really the best thing for Rex and Godiva?" was the question that harassed her mind. To come together, or to be kept asunder?

CHAPTER XIV.

“LAY THY SWEET HANDS IN MINE, AND
TRUST TO ME.”

THE news which had come to Garden Lodge on that October afternoon reached Barnard's Inn a little later on.

The tidings came to Rex in a brief note from Amyot Douglas. Not that the note was written on purpose to tell him that Godiva was coming home. Amyot wrote about a trifling matter of business—just a few lines touching some wine that was ordered for sick people—and the little bit of information was added in a postscript.

Rex read the note, left it lying on the breakfast-table, and walked straight to the open window. There were no changes in the quiet aspect of Barnard's Inn. The scene that met his gaze was just the same as it had been last autumn, and the autumn before that. The plane trees were dropping their yellow leaves in the dreamy light; scarlet geraniums still brightened the little garden of the quadrangle. He had grown quite fond of the old place, and as the years went on his liking for it had increased. He never thought, nowadays, of living elsewhere.

And so Godiva was coming back. Well, was it anything to him? It was everything.

The long years which had passed since he saw her had only deepened the impression of that summer day when they parted. She had been cruel when they

stood face to face in the old garden at Richmond. If he could forget her—if he could learn to care for any of the nice girls he often met—what an easy-going everyday life might yet be his! No—ten thousand times, no! Better to suffer this old weariness of longing and regret for the only woman he had ever truly loved.

He looked back on his brief passion for Belle Espinasse as a sort of nightmare. She had not changed very much by becoming Lady Dunn. She was the same beautiful creature, selfishly good-natured, frankly false, who had once so completely enslaved him. But the very charms which had bewitched him now moved him with nothing but aversion. Under every false feeling of this kind, there generally lies a true one which shows itself when the unreal is swept away. It

was always there. And Rex could say with perfect truth that he had never been untrue to Godiva in his heart.

He had not had the slightest hint, from any quarter, about the state of Godiva's mind. How could he get to know anything about her? Aunt Charlotte (who might have made herself useful if she had not been so hot-headed) had drawn off from her old favourite; and Godiva, conscious of the change, did not write to her often.

To Lady Colinette Crewe Godiva wrote frequently; but Rex was only slightly acquainted with Colinette. She was a woman in whom time made few changes, and she seemed to grow busier as she grew older. Mrs. Woodroffe had given up the old house at Northsea, and was now living in London with her granddaughter; and Mrs. Errington, who

seemed to have grown quite young again, went often to Richmond to visit that Home for little ones which her money had created. Rex sent donations, and had made himself of use in many ways ; but he had never drawn near enough to Godiva's friends to ask questions about her.

As he stood, looking out upon the yellowing trees, he wondered how and when they should meet again. Anyhow, it would be a frigid meeting, he supposed, with reserve on both sides. He could not hope to make her understand what he felt. Long ere this he had looked back on his hasty proposal with disgust. Long ere this he had learnt to comprehend her natural flash of wounded pride. But is anything harder than to propose to a woman who has once said "no" ?

And even if that old refusal did not

stand, like a hedge of blackthorn, between them, how could he know whether her heart was free? She had travelled in other lands, and had come into contact with many minds. Rex was no longer the hero of her girlhood; the friend, half-brother, half-lover, who had watched over her in the time of her bitter sorrow. Perhaps he was only a shadow, flitting now and then across her memories of the past.

And then, suddenly remembering that he was a grave man of business, with all kinds of heavy responsibilities resting on his shoulders, he turned to his neglected breakfast.

But Godiva's face could not be driven away from his mind; do what he would, she rose before him, pale and sweet and tender as she had been in the old days. City men, just come back from their

holidays, greeted him on all sides. There was even more than the usual talk about politics and the money-market; but he could hear her voice sounding clear through it all. Even in the midst of work and worry he did not lose it. It spoke to him softly as he bent over the ledger. It rang in his ears while he answered questions and wrote letters, all through that day.

The Durleighs arrived sooner than any one had expected them. They came at night, and took up their quarters in one of those palatial hotels built on the Thames Embankment. It made Godiva very happy to feel that she was so near her old home.

In the morning she stood out on the balcony, and enjoyed the familiar scene with all her heart. Some gleams of Italian sunshine seemed to have followed

her back to England; the skies were blue, the clock-tower of Westminster was glittering and shining; the warm brown sails of the barges took a tinge of gold. She was looking at it all with grateful eyes, when some one spoke behind her in a quiet voice. It was Amyot Douglas, who had come early to give her a welcome.

“Oh, I am glad to see you again,” she said with all her old earnestness. “You have not changed a bit, you are just the same. And Colinette?”

“Colinette does not change,” he answered. “She rejoices in her London life. It was such a happy thing to get granny away from that dull old house. The dear old lady has brightened wonderfully.”

“Four years!” said Godiva musingly. “I have been away four years; and I don’t want to go away any more. There

are welcomes everywhere; the river sparkles when I look at it; everything wears a smile."

"Then you have brought your heart home with you?"

He was looking at her kindly, penetratingly; but there was something almost solemn in the gentleness of the questioning eyes. Godiva thought of the knight's face on the wall of the picture gallery. And then she remembered that old idea of hers, that he was always watching and praying for them all. It was the life lived for others that gave him his strong personal influence. She understood him now.

"Yes," she said, answering the question with all the simplicity and straightforwardness of a child.

There was a moment of silence. And then he asked her, in a matter-of-fact

tone, if she were very busy that morning? Was there a great deal of unpacking to be done? What were their plans?

"Our plans? I think Uncle Hugh has scarcely thought of any," she replied. "Honor and I are charmed with hotel life; and there does not seem any need, just yet, to plunge into housekeeping. No, I am not busy, and the unpacking can wait if you want me."

"I want you to come out into the sunshine," he said, with a smile. "We must make the most of it while it lasts. This morning I was reminded of Morris Durlough, and I was thinking how clear it is that his influence lives among us all. How the children's Homes are increasing and multiplying! How many things that he longed to do are being done!"

The soft colour that tinged her cheeks told how deeply she felt his words.

“I will come,” she said eagerly. “I want to visit the old streets, I want to walk where he used to walk.”

“Then make haste.” He was looking at her attentively. “I have made an appointment with some one in the People’s Garden. Let us go there first, shall we?”

She sped away, and was back in five minutes, ready for the walk. Her face was fuller and rosier than it had been in bygone days; her eyes were brighter. Her mourning had been put off long ago; and she wore a pretty brown gown with soft dashes of red about it. Under the little brown velvet toque (worn in travelling) the bronze hair curled in tiny twists and rings; and Amyot Douglas saw that she was fresher, stronger, and happier than she had ever been before. The world had widened out before her

gaze; her old doubts and fears about herself and others had vanished.

They walked out into the morning light. Great beds of mignonette perfumed the air, and dahlias and asters brightened the People's Garden with their rich colours. There was Duke Steenie's old water-gate with its grey lights and shades; and there were the children of the people, playing about its massive columns as they had played long ago.

Some one who had been sitting on a bench near the water-gate got up as they approached. Godiva, whose thoughts had strayed into the past, came back to the present with a start.

"Good morning, Rex," said Mr. Douglas, greeting him quietly. "Here is the letter I promised to bring; and here is Godiva, none the worse for her travels."

He put a note into the young man's

hand, and then stood and calmly watched the meeting. The two who met, "after long years," were not quite as calm as he was. Their hands trembled; their voices faltered.

This time Godiva did not say "I am glad to see you." The warm blood mounted to her face. It was because she felt her cheeks burning that she stopped short, in a gentle confusion, just as she had begun to speak. She knew what it was, this joy which surged like a flood over her whole being and checked her utterance. She might refuse to believe in it, argue with it, disown it, and laugh it down; but her heart and her conscience would tell her that it was a very real thing.

Rex had flushed too. His dark face and deep eyes were glowing with subdued feeling. Amyot Douglas said little. They

heard him vaguely speaking of an engagement, and in another moment he was gone.

Then she looked at Rex, and saw, with a woman's quick perception, that he was greatly changed. The years that had brought her strength and brightness had worn and saddened him. Her grey eyes were full of the soft light of kindness; a deep compassion moved her and made her speak her thoughts aloud.

"Oh, Rex, you look tired," she said. "Let us sit down here and talk. There are so many things I want to know. Have you been in trouble? Are you ill? Tell me."

He had never dreamt that their meeting would be anything like this. He had thought that it would be formal and cold, with Mr. Durleigh and Honor looking on. To be here, in one of Godiva's old haunts, sitting alone with her, was so bewildering that he could hardly believe in it all.

They sat down side by side on the bench, and he looked at her for a moment in silence.

"No, I am not ill," he said, answering her questions at last, "and I have not had any reason to complain of my lot, I suppose. The wheels have run as smoothly with me as could be expected."

"And yet you look so tired," she repeated.

"Tired? Well, I think I have been getting tired ever since you went away! I have been going on, plodding through the same work day after day, thinking the same thoughts night after night. Nothing is so wearisome as monotony."

He spoke in a lifeless way, and his voice had a dull sound. It was not a very heroic mood; if the truth must be told, it troubled him to see his old sweetheart so pretty and bright. She had been

getting on very well without him all this time; there was no reason to suppose that she had regretted her refusal. That parting scene in the Richmond garden came back with startling distinctness. How angry and excited she had been then—how calm she was now!

Godiva saw that Rex was sad and dreary; but her instinct, sharpened and quickened by love, divined the cause. Her glance fell on the note that he was holding crumpled up in his hand.

"Have you forgotten the letter that Mr. Douglas gave you?" she asked. "I am afraid you are absent, Rex. I must find out what is the matter with you;—there is something that you have not told me yet."

"Why should I bore you with my discontent, Godiva?" he said, using her name for the first time. "It does not

concern you if my life is dull and spiritless. Your own is bright enough."

He was slowly opening the letter as he spoke. Only two lines were written in pencil on the sheet of paper which the envelope contained, and they were these—

"She strove against the stream; and all in vain;
Let the great river take her to the main."

The gloom vanished, and a sudden light broke over his grave face. Those two lines had told him all that he had wanted to find out. And her heart seemed to answer his thoughts with a strange silent response. She knew that she loved him, and she was not ashamed that he should know.

"Godiva," he said, quickly yet gently, "forgive my bitter mood. I hate myself and my ill-humour, dear."

"No, Rex, do not hate yourself," she

answered slowly, and their hands met,
"because——"

"Because what?" he asked, with
entreating eyes.

"Because I love you."

She had not meant to speak so plainly,
and she hardly thought of herself till she
had spoken. Then suddenly her heart
began to throb, and she blushed crimson.
Ah, he would never guess how she had
longed and prayed for this moment to
come! She had let the great river take
her to the main; she had been swept over
all barriers of reserve by the force of this
strong feeling. If he had not seemed so
lonely—so comfortless—she would have
kept back the words; but they were
uttered, and could never be recalled.

"Godiva," he said, "this makes amends
for all I have suffered—ay, and deserved
to suffer—through four weary years."

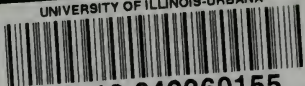
Then they sat together in silence for a time; and shadows and foreboding clouds were far away from that tranquil garden. 2

“Rex,” she said at last, “it is meet and right that we have told our thoughts to each other here. What better place could we have found than the People’s Garden? It was here that I walked with my father, often and often, in the cool of the day. And he, who so loved the people, and gave his life for their good, is with us in the spirit in this Eden of theirs this morning. It is a truth that nothing which has truly lived can ever die. It is only the false lives that perish. My father, and his teaching, and his great love, are with us now, and for ever and ever.”

THE END.



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